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HETTY.

BY

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NEW YORK:

HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,

FRANKLIN SQUARE.

1869.

HETTY.

CHAPTER I.

REBECCA'S REASONS FOR MARRYING ANY BODY WHO WOULD TAKE HER.

In one of the narrowest and dullest lanes in the neighborhood of Walham Green lived George Turner, Esq., Solicitor, of Gray's Inn. His house was the largest in the lane, had certainly pretensions to be, or to have been, a "gentleman's" house, for there was a coach-house and stable beside it; and the garden before and behind was full three-quarters of an acre.

The other houses in the lane were eight-roomed, semi-detached, brown brick boxes of houses; with long gardens in front, and little back-yards, with a water-butt and a clothes-line behind. They were miserable little places; yet Rebecca Turner, the youngest daughter, while lolling and yawning, could envy their inhabitants the possession of the key many times a day.

For there was life among them. Those among them who were thrifty, or well to do, or childless, or whose children were good, had pretty plots of flowers even; but this was rare, for there were too many children; and so, on a washing-day, the clothes-lines and poles were always up in the front-garden, stamped hard and black by a hundred little feet. Nay, there was another reason against flowers. The landlord of that lane did not see his way to new palings; and so, if you wanted flowers, you must keep them in repair yourself. Yet there was life enough there. The neighbors—the women—dawdled into one another's houses, and gossiped—nay, now and then, but very seldom, quarreled. Once there was a fire; and Miss Turner, the precise elder daughter, seeing them running, hoped it was not *their* house. "No such luck," said Miss Rebecca, with such singular emphasis that her elder sister let her be.

Turner's house, or The Cedars, stood back from the road, in a blotch of mangy grass, and a blotch of mangy, soot-stained gravel, and accounted for its apparent usurped title by one miserable stump and one miserable bough of the tree of Lebanon, which solitary bough pointed meekly and sorrowfully to where its brother had once stood. Behind the house was a bit of kitchen-garden, and a bit of grass unmown for years; which would have been something had it been secluded, but even that was denied you. It ended in a wide, wild waste of market-garden, stretching away acre after acre. The timber on the estate consisted of a broken-down mulberry-tree and a large quantity of sooty lilac.

The house, though in habitable repair, was in that half state of dilapidation which is sometimes a good deal more melancholy than a really good downright ruin. The ruin says to you, "Here, come here, I belong to you as much as to any one now; come, and I will tell you stories;" and tells them to you accordingly; whereas the half-dilapidated house says only, "We have secrets here yet." Turner's house was dark red brick, with a high tile roof, perpendicular to the top of the garret-windows, and then sloping like another—the most hideous of roofs; its door was approached by high steps, and the windows of the living-rooms were long and narrow, with thick wooden frames and bulgy glass panes; some were with a knob in the middle, which made looking out of window a luxury difficult to indulge in: internally, the furniture was principally of horse-hair and dark mahogany. And Miss Rebecca wished it was burned down.

In this house she lived. Mr. Turner was in religion of the strictest form of Calvinism and Sabbatarianism, forbidding any books except theological ones on a Sunday, and never allowing a novel or a book of poetry into the house. There had been a time once when she had been able to escape all this; before she had grown up; but that was all over. She had, unlike her sister, grown up good-looking. The widower, her father, had consulted religious women of the congregation; they had been unanimous; the girl Rebecca was much too pretty to go out by herself. From that time she was a prisoner, for her father was no man to be trifled with. Can one wonder that a high-spirited girl, capable of any kind of pleasure, should one very wet Sunday evening, after chapel and a sermon of an hour, as she was going to bed, emphatically wish she was dead, wish she had never been born, and most particularly wish she had been ugly?

"If I had been as ugly as you, I could have gone any where I chose, and done as I liked. It was old Mother Russel and Mrs. Soper that put *him* up to my being pretty. I wish *they* were dead with all my heart."

"My dear sister Rebecca! After chapel, too!" said her sister Carry, solemnly.

She didn't say she wished *that* was dead; she only clenched her hands and gasped for breath. That was the last of it all—all the dull misery of her life came before her stronger than ever at the mention of chapel, and she cast herself sobbing on the bed.

"I wish somebody would come and marry me," she said; "but there's no chance—no young men ever come near us. I'd marry Jim Akers, I'd marry any body—except that beast," she added, suddenly, with a shrill determination which pointed to a small chance in favor of the beast's prospects, and then by degrees she sobbed herself quiet.

CHAPTER II.

MRS. RUSSEL TELLS MISS SOPER SO MUCH AS SHE KNOWS OF THE FAMILY HISTORY.

THE lady so disrespectfully mentioned by Miss Rebecca as old Mother Russel, was taking tea with Miss Soper. Mrs. Russel had been, some said, born at Walham Green; but was certainly, with few exceptions, the oldest inhabitant there; Miss Soper, on the other hand, was a comparatively new-comer. These, it will be remembered, were the two ladies who had given poor Rebecca such very dire offense by persuading her father that she was too pretty to walk out by herself; and, having just talked through some of their other neighbors in whom we are not interested, and having come to the Turners, in whom we are, we will just make bold to listen a little to them.

Mrs. Russel was a fat, heavy woman, whose fat, unlike that of some people, had become physically distressing to her, and had made her cross. She had discovered the solace of spirits, but used them moderately. It is possible that she may have been a good-natured woman once, but the continual distress of her earthly load had made her ill-natured. Religion with her meant a slight excitement and society, but little more.

Miss Soper was a very different woman—pale, gaunt, black, rigid, with a face like a Roman-nosed horse. She had been for some years teacher in a small suburban ladies' school, until she came into a little money, when she retired, with no heart and a small annuity, to Walham Green. It was in her capacity as ex-schoolmistress that she voted on Rebecca's not going out alone. She was consulted as an expert, and left no doubt on the minds of Mrs. Russel and Mr. Turner as to her opinion on *that* score. In her religion she was most deeply sincere, in her duties most rigid; she saw no harm in talking over her neighbors' affairs, and she had a voice like an aged pie-man to do it with.

"That's a bright, clever-looking girl, that Rebecca Turner," she said. "Quick to learn."

"A deal too quick," said Mrs. Russel.

"She seems quicker than her sister."

"Caroline is a real good pious girl, and takes after her father."

"Rebecca don't, then?" said Miss Soper.

"No, Rebecca is another sort of girl. She looks so like her mother sometimes that I shake like a mould of jelly" (which was an apt illustration). "She takes after her mother; and Turner is a man who washes his dirty linen at home, but I misdoubt he has trouble with her now. If he hasn't, he will."

"Did he have trouble with her mother, then?"

"*Do you mean to say you have never heard?*" said Mrs. Russel, in solemn *staccato*.

"How could I? I had not come to the Green. Do tell," said Miss Soper, eagerly.

Mrs. Russel took her cup in her hand, and having stirred her tea, used the spoon for rhetorical purposes, and solemnly and immediately began.

"There's never been murder *done* in that house, my dear, for there's many a slip between cup and lip, but it's been *hollered* often enough. Awful nights have been in that house, my dear, between Turner and his wife," she continued, drawing closer and speaking low; "she yelling at the top of her voice at him, calling him every bad name she could lay her tongue to; he praying at the top of his voice, to pray the evil spirit out of her, until he'd lose his temper and fixt hold of her, and you'd hear her trying to bite him; and the little children a-screaming, and the maid run away for fear, and all the lane out to listen! Ah, quiet as Turner looks now, he has had something to go through in his time. You may well ask if he had trouble with his wife."

"Was she mad?"

"He never dared say it of her at all events," said Mrs. Russel. "I'll tell you all I know. She was a lady. Says you, so are we. I mean a real lady. Says you again, so are we. But I mean a real tip-top carriage lady, you know."

So did Miss Soper, who nodded. "And how did she come to marry him, then?"

"Well, Turner is a good figure of a man, though it was not that. He had got the management of her affairs when she was left a widow, and he managed them well enough to excite her gratitude; and she had been ill-used, and her friends had dropped away, and I fancy she thought she might do worse, and so she had him; and a bad job it was. But if a good sound Protestant marries a Papist and a worldling with his eyes open he must take the consequences."

"A Papist!" almost screeched Miss Soper. "Mr. Turner marry a Papist!"

"Well, she had a fine penny of money, mind you, and she was a thorough worldling, and careless of religion, and Turner thought he could convert her. We used to have her name down for conversion in the general prayer ever so long until she found it out, and had words with him. But it all came to nothing; she laughed him to scorn when he spoke to her about it, all of which he has told us at experience-meetings; and she found *that* out, and got furious, and things went on from bad to worse until Caroline being born put things square for a time. But after that Rebecca was born, Mrs. Turner fell ill, and asked for a priest to come to her, she having, of course, gone to mass on her own accord; and he made answer that no priest should cross his doors, not if she was on her death-bed. That was the worst scene she made him, for she started up in a shawl and petticoat to run all the way to Cadogan Terrace by Sloane Street, and had to be fetched back by force. Well, then nothing went right any way, and she seemed to lose head. She accused him of taking her money, and insisted that one of the children should be brought up a Papist, and used to smuggle off Rebecca continually to mass and confession, and such things, and some say got the child baptized into the Romish faith."

"It is extremely probable," said Miss Soper; "and how did it end?"

"It was after a worse row than usual," said Mrs. Russel, lowering her voice again. "It was the worst and the last, and there had been violence—it all came out at the inquest—and she went out somewhere, some said to the public house, but I never saw nothing of that, and others will confirm me; and when she came back he had gone away with little Rebecca, leaving word that she would never see the child no more, for that he had taken it away to save its soul."

"He was a fool to do that," said Miss Soper.

Mrs. Russel eyed her curiously. "You're a

sensible woman, ma'am," she said; "though I doubt if we are right religiously, seeing that he saved it from Popery. But," added the vulgar old gossip, flushing up scarlet, "if my man had come between me and my children in the old times I'd have— But as I was saying, when she hears that, she outs into the lane and carries on to that extent that Mrs. Akin (the washer-woman, you know, my dear soul, Jim Akin's, the coster-monger's, mother, whose mother had been with the barrer for years herself) says she never heard any thing like it. There was nothing low in it—no vulgar language nor swearing—but just downright awful cursing, like that in the Bible; and it frightened all that heard it. Then she went into the house and up stairs; and the maid had run away. And when he came home the neighbors told him what they'd seen, and how the child (that's Caroline now) had been a-crying all the afternoon. And when they burst in there she was a-lying stone-dead at the bottom of the stairs."

"What did the inquest say?"

"Nothing. Whether she fell down, or chucked herself down, there was nothing to show. The child only said that it had found its mamma asleep on her face, and that it wanted its tea, and couldn't make her wake. Well, ma'am, and that's the history of that little mystery."

"I'll go and see 'em," said Miss Soper, emphatically. "What time do they have their tea?"

CHAPTER III.

REBECCA'S LOVER, AND WHAT SHE THOUGHT OF HIM.

Mr. Turner, a man of about sixty, must have been at one time handsome, but now, although his features were good, his complexion was gone; and the continual habit, persisted in for so many years, of self-contemplation, had left an expression which was not very pleasant on his face; a look which an ill-natured person might say was something between a scowl and a sneer, as though he was continually saying, "I am George Turner, that is who I am, and who the deuce are you?" His conversation was, like that of many other men of the same standing, entirely about himself; arguing, one would fancy, from a certain feeling of being wanting in the more ornamental business of life, and from a determination that the hearer should know what an exceeding fine fellow he was.

Partly from religion, and partly from temper, he had been very careful to banish every thing graceful from his house, so that there should not be a snare in it. So he had sternly refused poor Rebecca's, who craved for such things, petitions for cocks and hens, for rabbits—nay, even for one poor little tiny bird. However, in an old house, where there are rats and mice, you must have a cat; and you'll not hinder a cat having kittens. And so it came about that Rebecca had two kittens to play with; and her father, letting himself into the house at half past four on a winter's afternoon, found Rebecca, perfectly happy, lying in the dark before the fire, playing with her two kittens, one of which had a blue ribbon round its neck, and the other a red.

"Get up," he said, "and don't lie there like a hoyden. Get up, and make yourself tidy. There are people coming to tea."

Rebecca never answered; that would only make her father colorably and openly angry, and she would have had the worst of it. But by long practice in this happy household she had got the trick of annoying him, and yet of keeping within the law.

"Pretty little darlings!" she said, with effusion, as she rose with a cat on each arm. "I wonder if you have immortal souls, dears; if so, they don't seem to be much trouble to you."

"Don't talk such nonsense as that. People would say that you were mad, if they heard you. For a grown girl to be kissing cats, too, and a marriageable girl! Bah!"

"Who's coming to tea, pa?"

"Mrs. Russel and Miss Soper."

"Daniel Lambert and the Old Dragoon. Pa, I wonder if Miss Soper was regularly discharged from the army, or whether she deserted, If I was her I should shave off that mustache, and let my whiskers grow. Who else is coming?"

"Mr. Morley," said Turner, without any open manifestation of anger, for certain reasons; "and also, I believe, Mr. Hagbut."

"Oh, pa!"

"I am at a loss to conceive why you should make an exclamation at Mr. Hagbut's name," said Turner.

"Are you?" said Rebecca. "I am not. If you were as young and pretty as I am, how would you like such a—minister of the gospel, setting down beside you the whole evening, quoting texts of Scripture to you which bore on the subject of love and marriage. If he wants to marry me, why don't he say so like a man—*and get his answer?*"

"I should feel highly flattered by Mr. Hagbut's attentions," said Mr. Turner; "and, moreover, I should reflect that his suit was backed by your father. Only, mind one thing, Rebecca—you refuse that good man at your peril. I insist on the match, mind that. You *dare* refuse him, that is all."

Not one word did Rebecca say to this, but left her father secretly fuming with anger. She went up stairs to her room, and began her toilet very slowly and very thoughtfully, and as she thought the face grew darker and darker, until the muscles in it began to quiver, and there grew upon it a look of deep horror and deep loathing terrible to see. She arose stealthily, and went with her candle to a box in the corner of the room, and secretly taking out a book began reading with shaking hands; the book came open easily at the place she wanted, and she was deep in the passage when she was utterly scared by her sister's voice in the room, crying petulantly, "Why, Rebecca, you'll never be ready in time. Mr. Hagbut's come already."

"I'll be ready directly, dear Carry; don't tell on me. It is only one of Sir Walter Scott's novels, and it is so interesting at the end."

"So it seems," said matter-of-fact Carry. "Why, you are as pale as a ghost, and all of a tremble? Now I can see why the ministers forbid us to read such godless rant."

One of Sir Walter Scott's novels, she said. Could it have been the "Bride of Lammermoor?" Heaven forbid!

Although she was going into company which

she disliked, and although there was at least one man there whom she hated, and whom she wished to hate her, yet in the irresistible instinct of beauty she dressed herself prettily, and coming calmly and proudly into the room with a bow, sat down by her sister.

Mrs. Russel and Miss Soper were there, and two ministers, one of whom she had never seen before, but one of them was only known too well.

He was a very large, stout man, with a head the color and shape of an addled egg, with the small end uppermost. He had a furze of gray hair, and whiskers shaved close in the middle of his cheeks; he had large pale blue, almost opaque eyes, very large ears, and a continual smile on a mouth made for talking. Probably black dress clothes and a white tie was as becoming a dress as exists—on certain people; on him they were hideous; his collarless cravat was a wisp, the lapels of his coat were like elephants' ears, and the coat itself was perfectly straight down the back, so as to set off his great stomach better in profile. His cuffs nearly concealed his great fat hands, and his short, ill-made trowsers scarce met his clumsy shoes. The whole man was a protest against beauty or grace of life in any way; to Rebecca he was loathsome, hideous beyond measure; and she was to marry him—unless she herself, alone and unaided, could fight a battle against all her little world. Poor thing! it was hard for her, it was, indeed. Forgive her desperation.

This horrible great moon-calf rose from his chair when she entered, and with a leering conscious smile on his face stood there, following her with his pale eyes, until she sat down. Mrs. Russel looked "arch"—a horrible thing for any body to do off the stage of a third-rate theatre, still more horrible in the case of a fat old woman. Miss Soper, *au fait* at things of this kind, moved from her seat and gave it up to the Rev. Mr. Hagbut, so that he now sat next poor shuddering Rebecca.

"Will you ask a blessing, Mr. Hagbut?"

Smooth came the easy words from that mouth, in the well-practiced, whining falsetto; dextrously quoted were the well-known texts of Scripture, so dextrously that he brought in the Marriage in Cana, and made through that an allusion to earthly marriages. "He has not asked me yet," she thought; "and if I am firm they can't kill me."

His style of talking was what one may be allowed to call spondaic; that is, he lengthened every syllable, and even when he came across one which was unavoidably short he lengthened it as much as possible. Then again he put the emphasis of his sentence just where no one else would have put it, and on the whole was one of the most painfully labored masses of artificiality and affectation ever seen. That the man may have been a good man I do not deny; I have only to do with his effect on Rebecca.

He gave himself, if not the airs of an accepted lover, at least of a man who was sure of his game.

"You heard my discourse the last Sabbath evening, Miss Turner?" he said, bringing his head as near hers as he could.

"I heard it," said Rebecca; "but I did not attend to it."

"The spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak," said he, smiling.

"I don't think that the spirit was willing," she answered. "I hate sermons."

This was very confusing, but under these circumstances one must say something.

"The prayer, or the hymn, pleases you better, doubtless?"

"I hate the prayer worse than the sermon, but I like some of the hymns—nay, most of them. I should like the service to be all music, light, and ornament, as it was at the Catholic church where I used to go with my poor mother."

"Vanity, my dear daughter, vanity."

"I don't see any particular vanity about it. Why, when you are praying extempore before a large congregation, and take pains, you are thinking all the time how it will succeed with the congregation. I have watched you."

Really it was very uphill work with this young lady; but see how beautiful she was, and besides she would have a little property. Mr. Hagbut drew nearer still to the shrinking hot form that held the ice-cold heart.

"Are you cold, dear Miss Turner?" he drawled.

"No, I am uncomfortably hot," she snapped out. "I think that I am not well. I think that I shall go nearer the door, if you will let me pass."

He was forced to do so, and with a great gasp she went and sat beside Mr. Morley and her father: her father seeing the Rev. Hagbut, his future son-in-law, looking exceedingly foolish, went to his assistance, and bound up the cracks in that savory vessel, leaving Rebecca sitting with Mr. Morley.

Now Rebecca knew Mr. Morley to be a Dissenting minister, as her father described him, of "great unction;" consequently she regarded him in the light of her natural enemy, and was prepared to do battle with him on the very smallest provocation. She could not, however, avoid confessing that he was a considerable improvement on that other horrible fat man with a head like an egg.

Indeed, she might have said, a very great improvement, indeed. Mr. Morley was a man with a well-shaped head, good and singularly amiable features, hair but slightly grizzled, curling all over his head, a fine deep brown complexion, and a beautiful set of regular white teeth, which contrasted well with the complexion, and which were pretty frequently shown by a manly, kindly smile. He looked a man every inch of him, although his face was gentle even to softness.

He had been watching Rebecca and her troubles. He had been brought here as the friend of Mr. Hagbut, he having to-day preached a sermon for him. He had, of course, been welcomed heartily by Mr. Turner, who in the openness of his heart toward a minister and a friend of Mr. Hagbut, had let him know the high honor which was in store for Rebecca. So Mr. Morley had watched while talking to Mr. Turner; and he had seen brutish, low, calculating admiration on the one side, and on the other a depth of loathing aversion which was terrible to him. He said to Mr. Turner,

"They will be happy, you think?"

"Any woman would be happy with such a man of God as Mr. Hagbut." And when he had said it he scorned himself. Yet for mere decen-

cy's sake, seeing that Morley knew, he put in the rider, "If she does not love him in the way of the world now, she will get to do so. Hundreds of girls would give ten years of their life to be in her place."

"That is doubtless true," said Morley, quietly, and the conversation went on to other matters, until it so chanced that the beautiful girl, with rage and fury in her heart, came and sat beside him.

He had a pleasantly-modulated voice, a voice of cultivation too, and he spoke to her.

"The wind has quite gone down," he said.

"Has it?" she answered. "I have not noticed."

"Yes, it has quite gone down. But it blew hard down at our place last night: I expected some of my chimney-pots down several times. The *Eliza*, in the outside tier, broke from her moorings, and has stove the bows of one of the screw colliers; yes, it blew very hard from east, shifting to southeast. Are you a sailor at all?"

"I know nothing of the sea."

"Pity; you should. I am half a sailor myself. I should know something about it, for half my work lies among sailors. Have you never been to sea at all, then?"

"I have never left this most utterly abominable spot in all my life."

"Well, I don't want to flatter you," said Morley, "and so I will say that it is intolerably dull. My place is considered almost the very worst and most wretched in London. I am surrounded with sin, crime, and occasionally fury and murder; but I would sooner be there than here."

"Where do you live, then, Mr. Morley?" said Rebecca, becoming interested.

"At Limehouse."

"Is it uglier there than here?"

"Very far uglier. This place is, in all that the eye desires, a paradise to it. If an educated man, like myself, were doomed to live in Limehouse in idleness, he would break his heart."

"You have not broken yours."

"No; I am too busy," he replied, laughing.

"Where is it?" asked Rebecca.

"Down the river. Down where the ships are."

"Where do the ships go to?"

"All parts of the world. You can get on board a ship there, and go any where."

"Do any of them go to countries where there are no chapels?"

"Plenty, I am sorry to say."

"Where you can do exactly as you please, and not be called to account for it afterward?"

"Certainly not. No such ships sail, because there is no country such as you describe. Not in all the countless millions of stars which you see on a frosty night is there any such country. Such ships would have plenty of passengers, though."

"It is a weary world, then," said Rebecca. "Do you believe in the immortality of the soul?"

"Certainly I do."

"Some do not. Is it not so?" asked Rebecca.

"Scarcely any," said Mr. Morley.

"Yet it is such a comfortable doctrine, I should have thought it would be popular. To think, to believe, that death *did* end it all, and that there was to be no more trouble, no more headache, no more anger. It is really not so, then?"

"Assure yourself of that. Ask yourself, Is it conceivable that the *will* which causes you, so mysteriously, by acting on your muscles, to raise your hand to your head—the will which may prompt you to a noble deed, or save you from a shameful fate—can *die?* I could speak at length of these things to you, but there is your father beckoning."

She rose without another word, and went toward her father, who was sitting beside Mr. Hagbut. He moved away, and pointed to his seat.

She, however, stood, and Mr. Hagbut, rising, took her right hand between his two fat ones, and looked her in the face with his sweetest smile.

She was deadly pale. There was too much fat covering the nerves of Mr. Hagbut's hand, or he would have felt, surely, the creeping horror in hers. It shrunk so from between his palms that it slid out and fell dead and pale by her side before he had time to speak.

"I was going to ask," said the unconscious nobody, "a little favor of my sweet Christian sister. I was going to ask if I might see her tomorrow morning for half an hour, just to ask one little question, to which I think I shall have a favorable answer. May I come?"

"O Lord, yes!" gasped Rebecca. "Come to-morrow and let us get it over," and so left the room abruptly.

"She has taken him," said Miss Soper to Mrs. Russel, as they blundered home together in the fog.

"Lucky girl! of course she has," replied Mrs. Russel.

"He will have trouble with her," said Miss Soper. "I know girls. I've had girls throw themselves out of window before now; and he will have trouble with her."

"Well, if you come to that, Henrietta," said Mrs. Russel, growing confidential in the dark, and in anticipation of the little hot supper which Miss Soper and she were about to partake of together, and blundering up against Miss Soper in her fat walk, "she will have trouble with him. For although he is a Saint, he keeps his saint's temper pretty much in the cupboard; she'll have to manage him, that's what she'll have to do. I know men, and the management of them. I've *had* to manage them."

Mrs. Russel's knowledge of men was confined to two, her husband whom she had managed into death by worry and *delirium tremens;* and her son whom she had managed into enlisting into the 40th regiment, now in New Zealand, from which island he had dutifully written, saying, "that now the water was betwixt 'em, he could express his mind more free." Which he proceeded to do.

Morley and Hagbut walked eastward together through the fog, and Morley was the first to speak.

"Hagbut," he said, "are you going to marry that girl?"

"Assuredly, my brother," said Hagbut.

"Have you thought of what you are doing?" asked Morley.

"Indeed, yes, with prayer," said Hagbut.

"But, see here, Hagbut. You are as shrewd as another. Let us speak as though we were of the world, worldly. Are you not making a great fool of yourself?"

"I think not, brother Morley," answered Hagbut, far too shrewd to give up such advantages as a religious phraseology gave him. "I think, looking at the matter even as one unredeemed and still of this world, that it promises well. The girl is fair to look upon, and she will have a little property."

"But do you think she cares for you?"

"Undoubtedly. No constraint has been put upon her, and she has as good as taken me. Our roads diverge here, dear brother. Good-night."

Omnibus after omnibus passed Mr. Morley, yet somehow he preferred to walk, and set his head steadily for Fenchurch Street, dark as the night was. And as he walked he thought, and thought of one thing only—this approaching marriage. It seemed to him so monstrous a proceeding altogether. If the girl consented it would have been bad enough, but against her will—

Why the girl's beauty alone ought to insure her a good match, an excellent provision with any one of a dozen young men of her own age; and she had fortune too, he heard; and for the whole of it to be offered up at the shrine of that ugly, windy donkey, with the education of a charity-school boy, and the manners of a boor. How pitiful a case for one so beautiful! And then he went on thinking of her beauty, and pitying her all the way home. Which was not good for the peace of mind of the Rev. Alfred Morley.

CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH REBECCA LETS HER SENTIMENTS BE KNOWN, NOT ONLY TO HER LOVER, BUT TO THE WORLD IN GENERAL.

And, alas! for poor Rebecca. She was in very evil case indeed. She would have cried aloud for help from man, but there was none to help her; as for prayer, religion had been for a long time hateful to her, so that way out of her trouble was denied her.

The phase of anger and scorn in which her soul had staid so long was gone now she was alone. The reaction from it was a feeling of plaintive, pathetic loneliness, infinitely mournful. This in its turn produced silent tears; they in their turn produced calm, and calm thought.

Thought sadly lame, incoherent, unconsecutive, but thought still. Here was an evil, to her most real and horrible, to be escaped from. What were her chances alone against the world?

Sheer angry persistent defiance and wrath? How would that do? Well enough as long as it lasted; but could she depend on it to last forever? Would they not beat her by sheer perseverance? Hagbut and her father were uncompressible men of strong physical capacity: could they not wear her out? merely *tire* her out? For look at her now; tired out in body by her long effort, as weak as a child, sitting on the floor crying and calling on her dead mother, without even energy to go to bed. A fortnight's fight with her father would reduce her to this state permanently, and they would be able to do as they liked with her. *That* would not do.

Craft, procrastination? No, that would not do with her father. She knew him too well for that. It would only weaken her hand, and the end would be just the same. No, try again, poor Rebecca!

The Roman Catholics! Her face brightened, and her breath came fast as she thought of that. If she ran away to the Roman Catholics they would take her in for her mother's sake, and shelter her behind their altars. She believed that she had been baptized into their Church; if so, they would know in Cadogan Street, and that would give them a right over her. It seemed for a moment a brilliant idea, but it was soon dulled. The case of Miss T—— was fresh then, and she knew that as a minor (she was but nineteen), a policeman had only to trace her, her father to demand her, and she would be brought back a culprit, in a worse case than before.

Evils fairly faced vanish away one-half of them into thin air. She had found no solution as yet, yet she felt if she could only go on thinking, that one would come. It made her almost glad in her desperation, when she first got the faith, that she certainly should find a way out of her trouble if she only thought long enough. So that, when some wandering fiend said to her, "If the worst comes to the worst, Putney bridge is close by; and when the tide is ebbing strong there is an undersuck there which gives back nothing alive," she rose, laughed, and shaking out her black, sharply-curled hair before the glass, looked at her beauty, and said: "Not for him. I will bed in no Thames ooze for such as he."

"Suicide—no!" she said, proudly; and all in a moment, as she said the words, a crude, shapeless idea came rolling into her brain, dazing her and making her gasp.

Whence came it, this frightful amorphous idea? Was it only the last result of some mental sorites, tangled beyond the possibility of reduction; or was it a direct suggestion from the unseen powers, in which we all believe in one way or another? It was so shapeless at first that it made her head whirl; but as she, in her desperation, steadily faced it, it crystallized itself, and took form. The form it took was ugly enough, yet it looked beautiful to her beside the hideous fate to which she was to be condemned to-morrow.

Suicide! Why did lost women commit physical suicide? Why did weak, cowardly women gather courage to leap off dizzy places into dark water—off places which they shuddered to look at with their protecting lovers' arms round their waist? What gave them this preternatural courage? Why, they had committed suicide before. They had done that which left them no place in this English world. Done that which made them a loathing and a scorn to father, brother, sister—to every one, save mother—and she had none. What if she were to pretend to do that which would make it at all events utterly impossible for this horrible old man to marry her! What then? Was there no escape there? There was.

For her father she had no pity whatever. He had brought it on himself, and it would do him good. Her mother had been her only friend, and he had ill-treated her mother. She knew the whole of the old story, partly from memory and partly from cross-examining her foolish sister Caroline. She had no pity for him. He knew well her hatred for this match, and had pitilessly thrust it on. Let him look to himself.

But here came a difficulty. How was she, after she had gained her own object, to rehabilitate herself? What means should she use to prove herself utterly stainless and innocent before the world, whenever it should suit her to do so? She walked up and down an hour thinking over this. Without holding in her hand irrefragable proofs of her own innocence, she would have played her part too well, and would have made it impossible for her, at the proper time, to hurl back the scorn of their miserable little world upon itself. The way out of this difficulty came on her suddenly, like a clear flash of light; and she laughed at her own stupidity in not thinking of it before.

The night wore on, and she packed away her clothes in her drawers, putting a few necessaries in a carpet-bag. She counted out her money—£18 odd—more than sufficient for her purpose. Then she sat down and wrote a short letter to her father:

"SIR,—It has pleased you, in spite of my frequently-expressed repugnance, to urge on my marriage with Mr. Hagbut.

"As I desire to remain single, I have chosen, between two evils, to disgrace myself and my family sooner than contract such a monstrous alliance.

"Your daughter,

"REBECCA."

It was now broad daylight until half past six. At which time Jim Akin, the coster-monger, and Mr. Spicer, the sweep, saw her come out of the door with her carpet-bag, close it behind her, and walk straight away, apparently in the direction of Putney bridge.

"Off at last," said Jim Akin.

"Wonder she hadn't gone afore," said Mr. Spicer. "She's a' stood it a dratted sight longer ner I thought she would. Who's the young man, then?"

"Doubt there ain't nerry one," said Jim Akin, "I ain't seen none round."

"She is off to the Catholics, then," said Mr. Spicer. "Her mother was one, and so is my wife. They'll take good care on her."

"I am glad of that," said Jim Akin, the coster-monger; "for she is a gallus kindly, good wench. She's got what I call a young 'art, that gal has. She nigh kep my old girl when I was in—in the 'orspital."

Mr. Spicer, possibly from a habit of regarding the world from his early youth out of the tops of chimneys very early in the morning, when there was little smoke, was a philosopher. This, also, was one of his clean days; he had had his bath overnight, having sent one of his assistants to the "black bed," and was a respectable tradesman instead of a grimy ruffian. He philosophized thus:

"Gals is much the same as boys is. I've hammered and leathered a boy into a cross flue, and he has choked hisself for spite. I've coaxed another boy into that self-same flue, and he has gone through it like a ferret. That girl has been leathered too much morally. I hope she will do no worse than going to the Catholics. Meanwhile it ain't, neither for you nor for me, to give the office on her."

Mr. Hagbut, coming for his answer at ten o'clock, found a scared household. Turner had not gone to business. He received Mr. Hagbut in the parlor.

Turner's state of mind was fury, nothing short of it. His daughter had utterly disgraced him, and perhaps it was fortunate for her that she was beyond his reach. At work in Turner's mind just then there were all the elements which, boiled in a caldron together, produce a thorough hell-broth of blind anger. His religion was very precious to him. I can not say why, for it gave him no comfort, but one sees it every day; and his pet scheme had been to increase his influence in this sect by the marriage of his daughter to their most popular and most *répandu* minister. It was to him like a marriage with a duke: here his vanity was touched. Again, he prided himself on being master in his own house, and had been defied and beaten. Once again, as a man of the world, he knew that he had been an utter fool in trying to force that beautiful, self-willed daughter of his on this dreadful, crawling old imbecile: here his self-love was touched. Once more, he saw now that he had acted like a fool throughout: and here was the *auctor mali*, the dreadful, unctuous old man, with a head like a bladder of lard, turning his hands over and over before him, and asking how his sweet sister was this bright morning.

Turner, who *was* a man, saw the utter folly of the whole thing in one moment.

"If by your sweet sister you mean my daughter," he said, "she is utterly ruined and lost. She has run away, God knows whither and with whom."

"Our dear sister fled?" said Mr. Hagbut.

A man can not, however religious, continually sit in law courts without knowing something of the ordinary language of his fellow-men. Mr. Turner was excited and angry, and, in his language at least, fell away from grace.

"I speak plainly. She has run away; and, upon my soul and body, I admire her for it. I wish I could get the wench back again, though. There were worse wenches than she. You and I are two fools, I doubt, Hagbut."

Mr. Hagbut began, "Peradventure—"

"Say perhaps," said Turner, testily.

"Perhaps, then," said Mr. Hagbut, solemnly, "your other daughter is at home, likewise the handmaiden?"

"What do you want with them?"

"Only, in the presence of Christian witnesses, to say that it can not be with me and your daughter as it was before. The few sheep in the wilderness—"

"What do you mean, man?" said Turner, sternly. "Do you mean that it is all over between you and my daughter?"

"Doubtless," said Mr. Hagbut. "The flock—"

"Hang the flock!" snapped Turner. "Can't you see that my poor girl would not touch you with a pair of tongs; that she would sooner ruin her reputation (and she is a high-spirited girl) than have any thing to do with you? Of course it is all over. We were fools to think of it."

"Doubtless," said Mr. Hagbut.

"Look here, man," said Turner, speaking as the man and the lawyer; "there must be one thing understood about my girl. She has left her father's roof, and I don't know where she is gone. But if you, or any of your good women, dare to say one word against her character, without legal proof, by the living Lord I'll make you sweat for it, or I'm no lawyer! Perhaps I've been wrong with the wench, perhaps I was wrong

with her mother; but you mind what I tell you."

So Rebecca had won her first move. She would have laughed had she known it, but she did not. She had taken down a tress of gray hair, and had twisted it in one of her own black curls, and had said: "How long will it be, Elizabeth, before they make my hair as gray as yours with their nonsense?" And old Elizabeth had said: "Well, we shall see the sea at the next station, and I have not seen it for forty years."

That was not a lucky day for Mr. Hagbut. He could not go near any one without being sympathized with, which was very terrible. Some lamented with him, some piously congratulated him on his escape; while the more influential of his congregation, those who could not be well refused, made him tell them all about it. A jilted man always looks more or less of a fool. The world has always put in force its penalty of contempt against those who are unsuccessful in love or war; and Mr. Hagbut knew that he was undergoing it, and, using his vast powers of looking foolish, he really succeeded in doing so. A most unsuccessful day!

Meanwhile, one thing was certain. Whatever had become of Rebecca, she would be persecuted by no more offers of marriage.

CHAPTER V.

THE LITTLE FRIENDS.

LEADER STREET, Chelsea, is one of those streets which utterly and entirely belong to the poor. It is a place where you may see the very poor at home in person, and looking at the stalls and shops where they traffic for their daily bread, may guess how hard it is for them to live.

The largest and most frequented shop in one street was the coal and green-grocery shop, dealing also in potatoes, bundles of fire-wood, and ginger-beer. The grocer's was a Saturday-night shop, as was also the butcher's. The green-grocer's, however, supplied some littler want, which might arrive at any moment. Half a hundred of coals, a bundle of wood, a couple of pounds of potatoes, were things in demand all the week round. Tibbeys were seldom still.

Tibbey himself was a very little man, like an innocent little bird, with a little hop, and a twittering way of serving in his shop that reminded you of a robin or some other soft-billed bird. Mrs. Tibbey was much larger, blonde, stout, and gray, and she looked as though she might have been something of a beauty in her youth; and, indeed, she was beautiful now, as far as an expression of gentle goodness could make her so.

This couple were perfectly devoted to one another, and were uneasy at the absence of either. In religion they were Primitive Methodists; and they were childless.

Except indeed by adoption, as it were. One child, whom Mrs. Tibbey had nursed, was very near to both their hearts, and always remembered in their prayers night and morning. They had risen from their knees, and almost had her name in their mouths when the door opened and she stood before them.

Rebecca, ready dressed for traveling. Before they had time to ejaculate she said, "Libber, dear, I have run away to you." Whereupon Mrs. Tibbey, as a preliminary measure, folded her in her arms.

"And I want my breakfast, please; I am so hungry. Please put some more tea in, Mr. Tibbey, for I shall want a deal, and I hate it weak. And could you let me have the cat? Then I will tell you all about it."

She was as willful with these good souls as she was at home; but, ah! with what a different willfulness.

"Yes," she said, as they began bustling about, "I have run right away, Mr. Tibbey. They were going to marry me to Mr. Hagbut."

"My pretty bird," said Mrs. Tibbey, pausing in her preparations to swell in pigeon-like indignation, and coo out her wrath, "my pretty love, how dared they?"

"Like their impudence, was it not?" replied Rebecca, very anxious not to make the matter look too serious. "Well, you know I was not going to stand *that*—far from it—and so I have run away to you, Libber, to make my terms from a distance. And you will lend her to me for three days, won't you, Mr. Tibbey, just to take care of me?"

"Miss Rebecca," said the little man, "you may, I think, depend on Elizabeth, as heretofore, always doing what is right. And what is right in this case, my dear young lady, is that she should go with you where you will, so that hereafter the finger—do I use too strong an expression, and give offense?"

"Just what I mean," cried Rebecca.

"Then I will use that strong expression—that the finger of scorn may never be p'inted. And indeed," continued the good little man, with the ferocious air of that most pugnacious bird the robin, "I should like to see the man who would dare."

What could Rebecca do but kiss him? She did it, however; and Mr. Tibbey toasted a muffin with many ominous shakes of the head, as though he would say, "I shall have to look some of these folks up some day, if they don't mind their manners."

It was a dingy little parlor enough (though scrupulously neat), and smelt of the stock in trade, in addition to the smell which I have smelt elsewhere, but have always, from early association, associated with Leader Street, underlying the whiff of red herring, cabbage, and coal, with perhaps a whiff of turpentine from the bundles of fire-wood; there was the true, low-London odor of soot and confined humanity. Yet what a free little paradise it was to Rebecca! The inevitable going home was days off in the dim distance as yet. She was free, and with those who loved her; her heart was so light that she could have sung aloud.

These simple, gentle Methodists, primitive in more than their methodism, saw nothing very extraordinary in the step which Rebecca had taken. It seemed to them that she had acted with singular discretion in coming straight to them. Living there as they did, in perfect purity and innocence, with sin and vice and poverty all around them, they were well used to far more terrible things than the mere fact of a young lady, sore-bested by an uncongenial marriage, taking refuge with them. Only one

remark did Mrs. Tibbey make on the subject during breakfast.

"Why, my dear soul, your good pa must be mad to think of such a thing! Why, he is sixty!"

"He is very rich," said Mr. Tibbey, blowing a saucer of tea. "He is the richest minister in that communion. He got no less than twenty—five—thousand—pound with his last wife. She was the widder Ackerman of Cheyne Walk, and he convinced her of sin, and married her."

"Law!" said Mrs. Tibbey, evidently not disinclined to hear more. "That would be a great snare for a minister. Got all her money, did he?"

"Every shilling," said Mr. Tibbey, holding out his cup for some more tea. "It was thought down the river-side way that her cousin, Mrs. Morley, would have had some of it, for she brought him into the house. But she didn't."

"What Mrs. Morley was that?" asked Rebecca, interested.

"Minister Morley's wife of Lime'us 'ole, my dear. She is dead some years now. Overworked herself, trapesing round after him among the poor of his communion, as lives round the 'ole, and up Ratcliff 'ighway, and all along shore there to Wapping. And she died, poor dear. Ah! the folks in their communion say that she was never truly awakened, and fell away from grace to the extent of refusing the ordinances altogether. But he loved her as I love Elizabeth. And she died."

"I know Mr. Morley," said Rebecca, eagerly.

"Then, my dear, you know a man who is as a sweet savor in God's nostrils. He is not of our communion on this earth; but we shall know him in heaven, and her too, maybe."

"What *was* Mr. Morley?" asked Rebecca.

"A gentleman, my dear."

"I *thought* so," said Rebecca.

"Yes, a gentleman and a scholar," said Mr. Tibbey; "with more of the knowledge of this world, and of science—falsely so called—than is good for a true Christian; for the knowledge of this world is vanity."

"I should like to judge for myself about that," thought Rebecca.

"He *were* a doctor, but he got converted, and joined their communion. He was from Cambridge College—one of the Simonites, I think they call 'em—but he pitched it all up when he got converted. There is the shop. Now you and Elizabeth see what you are going to do." And so the good man went out to weigh coals.

"Elizabeth," said Rebecca, "we must go from here this morning. Are you afraid to go to Broadstairs?"

"Not in the least. Would, indeed, very much like it."

"Then get ready," was all that Rebecca said; and the good woman departed to do so. The simple woman was entirely at the girl's disposal. She dreaded nothing but sin, and as far as that was concerned would have trusted her darling any where. But she knew also, that as long as she kept by the girl her fair fame could not be touched; and she went with cheerful recklessness.

It was not long before they had found an omnibus in the King's Road. An hour and a half afterward they were whirling along through the chalk-pits of Kent toward the sea. In the evening they were having tea together at an open window in a little cottage, with the sea gossiping to them at their feet; the Foreland a dim black wall, close on their right, and the white-winged ships creeping away to happy lands, where there was no chapel and no Sundays.

So said Rebecca. "It is good for me to be here," she said; "I could stand every thing except that man, if they would let me come here three days in the year. I could live six months in the recollection, and the next six on the anticipation. Libber, dear, let us run away again next year."

It was pleasant enough by daylight, it was pleasant enough by moonlight; but in the dark, dark morning, when the moon was down, and she awoke in the dark in a strange room, how was it then? Ghastly, horrible! What frightful machinery was this she had put in motion for the temporary destruction of her own good name and her father's? And how was it at that weary, ghostly old house at Walham Green? What were they saying of her? And she must go back to it in three days—a ruined girl. Would she dare do so? or would she die of fright, of sheer terror, as she approached it? There was the horrible old house, and there waited her angry father at the door. She had only taken the sole means to save herself from a fate worse than death; and now, in the darkness, she felt like a murderess and an outcast. What had she done that God should plague her so?

She could lie no longer in her horror. She rose and went to the window. The very blessed sea talked no longer under her windows, but had gone far out on to the sands, and was whispering there. There was no light in the sky, and there was darkness and terror in her soul.

Darkness and terror! The crowning horror in Frankenstein is the closed room where the monster must be. Her crowning horror was the old house at Walham Green, to which she must return and meet her father. The men who study a certain kind of wickedness say that what is wanted with women is opportunity. I believe that if the Rev. Mr. Hagbut had been able to take advantage of his opportunity, and had pressed his suit just then, poor Rebecca would have accepted him and thanked him. As she was in the dark, in the strange room, that man, coarse brute as he was, would have been a release from the closed, dull, disgraced house at home, with all its traditions and respectabilities violated in her wildly audacious person.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RETURN.

THESE were night-thoughts, how different were those of the day! The sea had come back and was rippling and plashing crisply at her feet. The bright sun was overhead, and a brisk east wind was driving the ships past the downs and down the channel. A pleasant sight. The outward-bound ones, full-breasted, crowded with canvas, gay; the home-going ones, sailless, melancholy, towed by steamers against the wind; however, one need only look at the outward-

bound ones just now, in three days' time one may think of the others.

Many ships went to and fro before Rebecca was tired of looking at them. She got more and more interested in them as time went on, asking all manner of questions about them from the boatmen and others on the beach; simple cockney questions, which puzzled those she asked in her very simplicity; even when her weary head was turned homeward they were still in her mind's eye.

Her despair at going back was so dull that it was nearly painless. "What signifies a little agony more or less?" Here, however, had been three days from which they could not deprive her; they would last her a long time these three days.

She came home about nine o'clock on the Saturday night. Her father opened the door, and she passed in quite silently, and taking off her bonnet, sat down, whereupon her sister Caroline began to cry, which assisted Mr. Turner in opening the conversation.

"You may well cry, my poor child," he began; "you must be worn out with this three days' anxiety, my dear; your sister seems none the worse for her disgraceful escapade."

"I am hungry and I want my supper," was all she said. "You can scold while I eat it. Only make a finish and end of it as soon as you can."

"Rebecca, where have you been, and what have you been doing?" said her father.

"I am not going to tell you," she replied; "I am not going to say one word."

"Are you aware that Mr. Hagbut's visits have permanently ceased, in consequence of your extraordinary conduct, and that your character is not worth *that?*"

"It was you who drove me to this course by your cruel abetting of that most unnatural marriage. If my mother had been alive you would not have dared to do it. Have you any thing more to say?"

"I have," said Turner, getting thoroughly angry; "your sister's character and position are affected."

"What, old Carry; why what has she been doing?"

"I mean that her position is affected through you. Are you aware that young Mr. Vergril seemed exceedingly likely to pay attention to your sister, and that your behavior has rendered such a course impossible on the part of any member of such an exceedingly strict family?"

"Give Carry the money you were going to give me in addition to her own, and he will come fast enough, I'll warrant you. My poor old Carry," she went on, kissing her sister, "I hope I have not lost you your sweet-heart. They drove me to it, you know."

Carry only introduced an imbecile whimper into her crying, as though she had been playing the organ and pulled out another stop. The stop would not go in again, and so she arose swiftly and went hysterically up stairs.

"Poor Carry," said Rebecca, dolefully, "I am very sorry for her; she would have liked the persistent self-inflicted misery of that Vergril family, and would have enjoyed herself thoroughly." So saying, she rose and rang the bell, and when the maid came, ordered supper.

When the maid was gone Mr. Turner had a few more words to say. "You are carrying matters coolly, Rebecca. But there is one thing I wish you distinctly to understand. The next time you leave my house without my permission you leave it for good."

"I quite understand that! You drove me out of it, and I went for my own purposes. I shall not go again. Have you any thing more to say?"

"Nothing at present."

"This may seem an unpropitious time to say what I am going to say, but I will say it, nevertheless," resumed Rebecca, very quietly and calmly. "Father, I remember something, and I know more. I know that this has always been a miserable and most unhappy house. I know that you and my mother were bitter enemies, instead of being as husband and wife should be. I know that all your recollections of my poor mother are painful, revolting, shocking; and I know that I being like her in person and temper have kept them alive. We have never been friends. Say that it has been my fault. I say that I am tired of it, and wish to be friends; I am sick of this everlasting antagonism of will between us; it has done no good. I have resisted you, but you are as obstinate as ever; you have tried to coerce me, with what success I leave the last three days to tell. Why should this battle —this unnatural battle go on? Can not you let me love you? Such a little yielding on your part would make a heaven out of this most miserable world. Will you answer?"

Not one word would he answer, except to say, "Have you any thing more to advance?"

"Yes. I left here three days ago a desperate, hardened woman, casting my good name to the winds to save myself from a fate worse than death, which you had prepared for me. During those three days I have been lapped in love—a love abundant and never failing, and surrounded by a religion purer and gentler than yours, father; a religion which hopeth all things, and believeth all things. And in spite of my cold bearing and my hard words, I have come back softened and purified. Father, life is not so very long, and we shall, I suppose, never part again. If I have said hard and bitter things since I came into the house, will you forgive them me as I forgive what you have said, and let us learn to love one another?"

No. His heart was dumb to it. He had never yielded to the mother, was it likely he would yield to the daughter? He told her in a surly voice to show her repentance and amendment by duty and obedience, and then began his supper, as she did also, feeling obstinate, angry, and humiliated, but also having "a mighty disposition to cry."

She spoke next, hard as iron. "My health will suffer if I am entirely confined to this house, and you would scarcely wish that. May I walk up and down the lane if I promise not to go out of it? You may set Mrs. Russel and Miss Soper to watch me, if you like; or, if you think it worth having, I will give you my word of honor."

"You may go from one end of the lane to the other, but no further. I'll have no scandals any more. I ain't so rich as some think, but I'm well trusted—very few dream how much. And

my good name is more precious to me than any money. And I've tried to keep it good," he went on, in a loud excited manner. "And any other would have made thousands where I've made hundreds; and no one has ever dragged my name in the dirt except your mother and you. And I served God faithful," he went on, now beginning to weep, poor fellow. "And I tried to keep my name clean: the greatest in the land have said to me, 'Turner, you are not a lawyer, you know, you are a friend, we can trust you here, your name is unspotted;' and God has afflicted me like this. First your mother, and then you."

Rebecca's bolder and more generous nature, which indeed was ill-directed, the main cause of her petulance, was thoroughly aroused. She went to him and took both his hands, saying, quickly:

"Father! father! your good name shall not suffer from me. I am as innocent as the day. I can prove my innocence at any moment. Do you think that *I* have done any thing unworthy of you? Do you think that I did not have my proofs behind me as clear as noon?"

"Proofs! silly girl, yes; but who will believe them? You little know this wretched world and its tongues. Do you think that any thing will ever quiet old Russel and old Soper's tongues? You are a fool if you do."

"And who are they?" asked Rebecca, loftily.

"The tongues of the world we live in. The tongues which would turn against me first of all, and ruin me in our religious connection, if any thing went wrong. You don't know the world, and are a fool."

"I wish you had been away with me these three days, father; you might have got to despise this little, squalid world of ours."

But he remained sulky and silent. Yet in a surly strange manner he took her into his confidence before he went to bed.

"You are a bold, courageous girl," he growled. "I needn't ask that, this week's experience shows that."

"I believe that I have good courage, father."

"That's lucky, because your sister Carry is a nervous fool. And you are a light sleeper, too, I know."

"Yes, the slightest thing awakes me."

"Then see if you can make yourself useful. If you hear the very slightest noise in the night, you run to my bedroom just as you are, shake me, and pull me out of bed. You will find a light burning. I am apt to be mazed and stupid when first awakened. Are you afraid of firearms?"

"I never saw any. I will do what you tell me. I will trust you thoroughly."

He went to a drawer in the side-board, and came back with a Deane and Adams revolver in his hand.

"See here," he said. "If I am not fairly awake, you will find this on the stand by my bed's head. If any man comes into my room before I am ready, take it—so—hold the barrel toward him—so—and keep pulling the trigger back—so. And screech murder the while. Can you do that?"

"I will try. But why is this? Have you much money in the house?"

"Money and worse."

"Could you not pay it into the banker's?"

"No, I daren't. I know too much. You would not be fool enough to talk of this?"

"Is it likely?" she said, smiling. "Will you say good-night?"

"Yes, I will say good-night. But mind, your treatment depends on your behavior. If you think you are forgiven, you will find yourself mistaken. I'll have obedience."

And so he went. And she began putting away the consumable portions of the banquet, that portion of the family supplies which, by a fiction current in such houses, the little servant is supposed habitually to pick and steal (their little servant would as lief have eaten molten lead). She had put away the cheese, the sugar, the whisky, and had locked the cupboard. She had got the ham, the loaf, and the lettuce on a tray, and was starting down stairs to lock them up in the larder away from the cat, who was all the time playing a game combined of cat's-cradle and puss-in-the-corner between her feet, mewing in a bland whisper, when she drove the tray into her father's chest, and brought him up short. "Ho!" he said. "Putting the things away. That's right."

The cat at once intertwined herself between his legs and amicably tripped him up.

"Bother the cat!" he exclaimed; "but she reminds me, though. I don't want to make it any duller than I can for you, Rebecca; only I will have order kept. You asked me last year if you might have a dog. And I said no."

"You did."

"I say yes now. You can have a dog, if it is a pleasure to you—"

"May I have a large one, or a little one?"

"Any size; but let him be a barker, a tearer, a dog that never sleeps. Silcox has got dogs that would tear the heart's life out of a man, if he bent his black brows at them, and the other day I saw his grandchildren playing at horses with them. Get a dog like that, if you can; but get a barker."

CHAPTER VII.

THE NEW LIFE.

In the whole history of insurrections I honestly believe that comparatively few are entirely unsuccessful. The position of the insurgent party is, in most instances, after a short time bettered. The fact is, one would fancy that no government is strong enough to stand many serious insurrections, and therefore, as soon as its stomach or its safety will allow, gives magnanimously what it would be dangerous to refuse to a high-spirited and well-organized minority—like Rebecca.

Her insurrection was not entirely without its fruits. If you come to consider, a daughter who has shown herself able and willing, under provocation, to absent herself promptly and secretly from home—making you look like a fool, and harassing you with inexorable terrors—is by no means a young lady to be trifled with. I once, in the range of my own personal experience, knew a young lady of tender years, in a certain school, who had the singular physical power of being very ill under the slightest contradiction; I mean ill as people are ill off the North Foreland. That child ruled the school, and learned just what she chose—which was nothing.

Turner was going to have no more escapades

in his house. If Rebecca had only known her power she might have done pretty much as she liked, but she did *not* know it. Her feeling was, that she had utterly overstepped natural bounds, and had been on the whole, for her father, kindly received home. Her feeling about her escapade was one of sheer terror, now that the old manner of life was all around her. It would take a still more dreadful provocation to make her take such a step again.

Women, trained for so many centuries to entire dependence, are not good at a long, steady defiance to association and habit. That they are capable of it, the whole world knows; but if it is forced on them the sustained effort which it costs them makes them coarse, fierce, and unwomanly. This continual effort of defiance will soon make, from habit, a woman's voice hoarse and manlike.

Rebecca happily escaped this. Her father had yielded, grudgingly, indeed, yet still had yielded; more than she had hoped for. Her condition was improved. The heretofore forbidden lane, with all its wonders, was at all events hers now. With fresh healthy vitality, with the curiosity toward the world and its ways of a child in the wood, this lane, with its swarming, dirty population, was as a deeply interesting book to her, which she was eager to read.

She was the first moving in the household on Monday morning: the intervening Sunday she had passed in bed. She roused the maid, and left the others sleeping. When they came down there was breakfast ready, the Bible set by his plate, her father's boots in their place, the newspaper warmed and ready for him, and his rasher of bacon hot in the fender. These facts, being taken by the allied powers as denoting contrition on her part, were received by her father in dumb silence, and by good Carry, who always trumped her father's trick, by a wondering sniff or two.

She did not care. She was to go into the lane, and have a dog of her own. Hagbut was a thing of the past; she would soon win these two over.

The portion of Scripture which Mr. Turner had to read that morning was rather unpropitious to his purpose of twisting a moral out of it to hurl at Rebecca's head. It was the journey of Jonah to Nineveh. He thought that he should have to leave her moral exercitation to the prayer, when, stumbling on, he came to the fact that Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, exactly the time which Rebecca had been away. He emphasized this point so strongly, and paused so long, that Carry groaned, and the little maid —aroused suddenly from the orthodox religious coma, into which she always fell on the celebration of any form of worship, public or private—exclaimed, "Laws a mercy me!"

It was a great, though unforeseen, point or hit, this suggested parallel between Jonah and Rebecca; but Mr. Turner was too old a hand not to see that it would not hold water too far. Rebecca thought that he would have twisted it into the prayer; but he knew better. He started from an entirely new basis of operations. "It don't matter," said Rebecca; "I shall catch it somehow." And so, when her father said, "Let us pray," she knelt down, wondering how he was going to do it.

He led up to his theme in the most masterly manner. It was feebly like some Scotch sermons, which one dimly remembers. You know the preacher's theme from his text, and you hear him go away into subjects apparently irrelevant, possibly three vague themes, which seem to have no relation to his text. You sit puzzled, and yet pleased, while he spins his first crude mass of yarn off into a single thread and leaves it. Then he spins you another heap of yarn into a thread; and leaving that, another; and then, taking his three threads, he spins them into a cord, which brings you back to his original proposition and his text. Then you take out your watch, and find that you have been sitting, with your intellect at its highest power, for one hour or so, and have thought it twenty minutes. A good Scotch sermon is not a thing to be despised. The Scotch are not considered to be devoid of brains, and they like them.

Turner's prayer had no similarity to a good Scotch sermon more than this. Rebecca knew that she would be his theme, and wondered how he would handle it. He handled it well enough for an Englishman. A Scotchman or a French preaching priest would have done it better; but it was creditable in a mere amateur.

Turner began by airing the old question of the permission of evil. The higher power doubtless knew best, he wished that there might be no mistake about *that;* but, at the same time, he, Turner, did beg and pray the First Cause to reconsider his opinions, and take to governing the universe more in accordance with his, Turner's, ideas than heretofore. He proceeded to offer a singular number of practical suggestions to the First Cause, which he hoped might be practically attended to on the first opportunity. And then he began to draw up to Rebecca, who knelt with her head on one side, wondering what he was going to say.

It was in the thanksgiving part of the prayer that he overthrew and demolished Rebecca, to her great admiration and wonder. She had begun to think that he was going to leave her alone altogether, for she was at a loss to understand how he could have any great thanksgiving to make on her account; but when he began to thank the First Cause for such afflictions as had been sent him, and also for the strength which had been given to him in bearing them, she saw how he was going to do it—and admired.

She wondered much at his ingenuity in attacking her under a form of thanksgiving to the Deity. She wondered still more at the ingenuity of the details; but what she admired most of all was the singular, self-complacent egotism which underlay his whole prayer, and which cropped up at every point. She knew of old her father's habit, common enough to men who live in a little world, of talking of himself to other men; but to hear him, while attacking her, point out his manifest excellences to the Deity, and then compare himself to a miserable worm, filled her with pure astonishment. She had never before seen how entirely her father was given to self-worship. Abraham's pleading was reasonable; her father's was utterly unreasonable. When he came to the ultimate point of summing up his utterly blameless life, and thanking Providence for afflicting him with an undutiful and rebellious daughter to keep him from the sin of self-glorification, she was pained and dazed. She wanted to love him; how could she when he

was so far from all else that she loved? Her father's religious exercise this morning had by no means a good effect on her. She was angry and sulky when she rose from her knees.

And she had meant to be so good. She left Carry to administer the little cares of domestic life which she, in the warmth of her heart, had prepared. She was silent and angry, and her father congratulated himself on having brought her to a sense of sin. He had brought her to a deep hatred of his form of religion.

She ate her breakfast in silence, but, keeping in mind the admissions of last night, saw that they must be kept before him. Toward the end of breakfast she said,

"I am to have a dog; and I am to walk up and down the lane; that is allowed. I wish that some arrangement might be come to under which I was not to be prayed at by pa before the maid, but that, I suppose, is hopeless. I can only say that, if it happens again, I shall rise from my knees and walk in the lane. I hate it."

"My dearest Rebecca!" said poor Carry.

"You may well say your dearest Rebecca, you two," said Rebecca, sullenly. "I meant to be as good as gold this morning, and submit, and be cheerful, and all that sort of thing. But I wish it understood that I will not be prayed at by pa, and thanksgivinged for by pa, or any one else. I may as well state my intentions at once. It is more than probable that very shortly I shall join the communion of the Primitive Methodists."

This was not quite such a dreadful threat to Mr. Turner as it was to Carry. Certainly, Mr. Turner reflected, the poor little Primitives were a low and poor sect, and the secession of one of the members of his household from a sect so rich as his, small though it was, a sect which nearly rivaled the National Church, would be as sad a thing as the secession of an ultra-evangelical in the National Church to Wesleyanism or the Baptists. Yet, after all, if she did go, it would be one way of accounting for her eccentricity. He put on his boots and went to business in tolerable humor. If she did not do worse than go to the Primitive Methodists, and if that abominably sleepy policeman would keep his eye on the house for a few months, matters would right themselves.

CHAPTER VIII.

LORD DUCETOY.

The moment that Turner had shaken the dust of his own house off his feet, the little anxieties of that house were cast in the back-ground, and he was in another world. For, to tell the truth, at this very time Turner's religion, and Turner's domestic troubles, were actually swamped in another great matter—had become for a time, as it were, relaxations. The man was living two disconnected lives (unless Rebecca could connect them), and the least disagreeable was to him almost a relaxation. This great matter shall develop itself.

On Walham Green he caught the white Putney omnibus as usual; but not as usual did it drop him at the bottom of Chancery Lane. He got out at Arlington Street, Piccadilly, and made his way quickly to a private house in Duke Street, St. James.

"Is Lord Ducetoy up?" he asked of the quiet-looking servant in black who came to the door.

Lord Ducetoy was up, had finished breakfast, and was ready for Mr. Turner. He was shown up stairs into Lord Ducetoy's presence, and he looked on him with very great curiosity.

A handsome, well-made young man enough, light in hair, blonde in mustache, with the deep brown of the Western prairies still on his face; standing with his back against the chimney-piece, and lovingly wiping a gun with his handkerchief.

"How d'ye do, my dear Mr. Turner?" said Lord Ducetoy. "Thanks for coming so promptly, for I am in trouble."

"In trouble, my lord?" said Turner, very seriously. "Please tell me how."

"Well, it seems that I have not got any money."

"Your lordship has plenty of money. I can let your lordship have a thousand pounds at this moment."

"Then I wish you would. I wrote a check for a hundred pounds on my uncle, Sir Gorham Philpott, yesterday, and they have cashed it certainly. But they have written to me to say, as there is only £37 10s. in their hands, they request, either that more money may be paid in, or that our account may be closed."

"Oh, that is their move, is it?" said Mr. Turner.

"That is their move, my dear Mr. Turner," said Lord Ducetoy. "Rather a disagreeable one for me. You must know, as my uncle's old man of business, that I never expected to come into this earldom and this money. My uncle's death was utterly unexpected; my cousin's death at Madeira equally so. I was hammering about in Canada, trying to invest a certain thousand pounds I had so as to bring me in a living, when I suddenly found myself an earl, with a considerable income. Coming home, I find my check nearly dishonored, at my own uncle's, for one hundred pounds. I am a quiet fellow, but must live. I should be glad of some money."

"There is plenty of money," said Turner.

"I should like to see some of it," said Lord Ducetoy.

Turner sat musing and looking at Lord Ducetoy for some little time. At last he said:

"I suppose you know that your estates are rather heavily mortgaged?"

"I have heard as much."

"And that the mortgages are held by Sir Gorham Philpott & Co.?"

Lord Ducetoy had not heard that.

"Do you know that Sir Gorham Philpott & Co. are now Sir Gorham Philpott & Co., Limited?"

Lord Ducetoy laughed, and said "that he was not aware of the fact; but that their ideas of credit were certainly limited."

"They are, my lord," said Turner. "For limited liability is only another name for unlimited irresponsibility. Do you know nothing of the family jewels, of the family papers?"

"I know that there are great jewels, and cash, and papers. I suppose they are at the banker's."

"My lord, they are nothing of the kind. They are at my house. My lord, the limited bank, long really bankrupt, which has been trading un-

der the name, once respectable, of Sir Gorham Philpott, holds the mortgages on your estates, about the only asset they have. It has not seemed to me expedient to break with them, and bank with another house, lest they should inconveniently foreclose. But I have kept all out of their hands that I could. I, as executor under your uncle's will, have received the plate, the jewels, the deeds, under my own roof; and the responsibility of them is turning me gray."

"Could we not send them to Child's, or to Drummond's?"

"My lord, we owe Philpott's money—a great deal, I doubt."

"Can we pay it?"

"Yes, we can pay it. But their name is—and when the smash comes, we must take our chance with the others. I don't want our jewels and plate to be put into their bankruptcy."

"Then keep them where they are," said Lord Ducetoy. "I can trust you." And he whistled as he rubbed his gun, and said, laughing: "Well, I suppose now I have got money, I shall never be happy again. There is one thing I wish to say, in our prairie way, Mr. Turner. My mother says, that I can trust you through thick and thin; and so I mean to, for *she* never was wrong in her life. So if you find it possible, I should like to make our relations as friendly as possible. There is, by-the-way, a touch of New England in that, because I can't do without you. I don't mean that we are to rush into one another's arms, but if we try we may get friendly in time, I don't think it will take long." Here he got very red. "I only just remember my cousin. I hope to know her husband better. Will you dine with my mother and me to-day?"

Turner went up to him, and taking his hand, looked him frankly in the face, said, "Did she ask me?"

Lord Ducetoy nodded.

"Then tell her *No*. It is best all over and done with. Tell her also, that the trouble we thought past has begun again in my daughter. Good-by. You may trust me."

CHAPTER IX.

THE SKYE TERRIER.

REBECCA's good-humor came back the instant she was outside the garden and into the lane. She had tempted Carry to come, but Carry wouldn't. "You had better come," said Rebecca, "we shall have some amusement. I am going to Jim Akin about a dog, and it will be very pleasant." Carry would have liked to have gone very much, but she had said that she wouldn't in the first instance; and consistency, or, as some low people call it, obstinacy, is the brightest jewel in the British female's crown; so she declined to enjoy herself with her sister: and visited her self-imposed querulousness on the little maid.

Neither Jim Akin nor Mr. Spicer the sweep was out. With Akin it was always a slack day on Mondays, having worked Chelsea, principally Jews Row and Turks Row, with periwinkles, whelks, and shrimps the Sunday afternoon, and resting before going out to buy stock from the market gardeners. With Mr. Spicer also it was a "clean" day, few owners of houses of sufficient respectability to require their chimneys swept by the hand of a master caring to make preparations for the sweep on Sunday night.

Very respectable Mr. Spicer looked in his off-duty clothes, comically unlike the hideous fiend-like figure he was when on duty. Rebecca had the advantage of the respectful counsel of these two excellent people on this occasion.

"If you please, Mr. Akin and Mr. Spicer," she said, after the usual salutation, "I want to get a dog; pa is going to let me keep a dog."

They were both deeply interested at once. Mr. Akin, being professionally more accustomed to conversation, dashed into the subject at once.

"Warmint or general, Miss?"

"I don't quite understand," said Rebecca; and so Mr. Spicer, a sententious man, much looked up to in the Row, leaned against the fence and defined, after the Aristotelian method:

"A warmint dog, Miss, as his name implies, is a dog as is kept for the killing of warmint. Now there's a many kinds of 'em: bull-dog, bull terrier, fox terrier, black-and-tan terrier, toy, dandy, and Skye. Similarly there's varieties in the nature of warmint, as badger, pole-cat, weasel, and rat. Of badgers there is country badgers and old hands. Of pole-cats there is wild and tame. Of rats, why there's as much difference in rats, lor' bless you, as what there is in Christians. I've seen big rats as a new-born kitten could kill; and contrariwise, one of my young men went to enter a well-bred year-old toy with an old rat, and I am blessed if the dog didn't cut and run for his life, howling round the lanes, and the rat after him."

"I seen it," said Jim Akin.

"But I don't want a dog to kill any thing," said Rebecca.

"Miss wants a general dog, I expect, miller," said Jim Akin, to the master chimney-sweep. "Tip her some of your advice now."

"General dogs, Miss," said the miller, complacently, "is, like warmint dogs, various; and I never seen none that was much count, takin' into consideration what dogs was made for. Still Providence made 'em, and the fancy gives prizes for 'em, similarly as they do for fantails and pouters, and other rubbish that were only created for showing and dealing. If I had my will, Miss, there should be no prizes for any pigeons except carriers, and none for any dogs except real warmint."

"Greyhounds," murmured Jim Akin.

"And you may add pointers and setters," said Mr. Spicer; "but they're gentry dogs. When you are a gentleman with a moor in the 'ilands, talk about 'em; not now."

"Miss wouldn't want a fighting dog?" suggested Jim Akin, accepting the rebuke.

"Do she look like it, neighbor?" said Mr. Spicer, almost severely.

"A fighting dog ain't half a bad thing to mind a young lady, if she wanted to go a walking far by herself," said Jim Akin, not to be entirely driven from this point.

Mr. Spicer was very fond of his neighbor, but he had to ignore him, he was getting low.

"With regard to general dogs, Miss, which were your views?"

"Well," said Rebecca, "I should like a dog which would bark if it heard a noise, and a dog I should be fond of. I think I should like a lit-

tle dog the best. I think I should like a little hairy dog, like the Queen's in the picture, you know, which is begging to the Macaw for its biscuit; if it did not cost too much."

I know nothing of the private life of Mr. Spicer or Mr. Akin; when I am thrown against gentlemen in that particular circle of society, I ask few questions. If any of ourselves had no education, and associated with, bought and sold with, ay, and intermarried with the criminal classes, should we look on the lighter crimes with the same detestation we do now? A man whose wife's brother has been transported, and yet who gets treated as a respectable and trust-worthy person by the district inspector, seems to me to be in his way meritorious. If a little stray dog follows him home, or if a strange pigeon come into his trap, why, he is possibly not so chivalrously particular as you or I should be; when you get to the very verge of the criminal class you must make allowances.

Jim Akin and Mr. Spicer interchanged a glance, and then Jim Akin spoke. "I have got a little dog in my back-yard, Miss, which you might care to look at."

"Undeniable character," said Mr. Spicer. "Never 'tized, but character un-de-niable, against all the Pleece in creation."

Rebecca assented at once, and they went in through Jim Akin's close-smelling house, which had a mingled scent of washing, dirt, children, cabbage-stalks, baby, and cheese; and out into the little back-yard, separated from the neighbors' back-yards by a low, broken paling. There was no vegetation in it, except, at the farther corner, an elder-tree. And at the foot of the elder-tree there was an American flour-barrel, and at the entrance of the flour-barrel sat a little, tiny, innocent dog, chained up, and looking very unhappy.

It was a very beautiful little Skye terrier, a dog worth money, but grimed with ashes and soot, unkempt, unwashed, utterly and entirely miserable and wobegone. It was a dog which had been cared for, and loved, and tended in its time, so carefully tended, that it had lost its instinct of self-care, and had lost its mistress, or let itself be stolen, and had come to this. It cowered when it saw Jim Akin and Mr. Spicer; but when it saw a lady with them it looked up at her with its light hazel eyes, and held up its poor innocent little paw.

Her father might well call her a fool. I suppose she was a fool according to his light. Her heart seemed to swell suddenly within her, and her eyes not all unready for tears, for the little dog, out of its misery, had appealed to her as Friday did to Crusoe. She went straight to the barrel, undid the dog, and took it to her bosom.

"I will buy this dog of you, Mr. Akin," she said, without turning round. "My father will pay for it. Send in a moderate price to him, or he will not let me have it. I will pay the difference. I will have this dog."

"Will you let me give you the little dog?" said a voice, close at her elbow.

She turned quickly round. It was Mr. Morley, the dissenting minister, who stood close beside her.

CHAPTER X.

MR. MORLEY.

Nobody likes to be caught suddenly in a sentimental mood. Every true-born Briton hates it almost as much as he hates being caught in (respectable) sin. Rebecca had just been caught in a sentimental mood over a grimy Skye terrier, in company with a chimney-sweep and a costermonger, by a dissenting minister. In the revulsion brought on by a nearly strange face, the situation, instead of being really beautiful, as it was one minute ago, was in the highest degree ridiculous—as she thought.

"How did you come here, Mr. Morley?" she asked. "I am surprised."

"I came to see you, and I saw you come in here, and I followed you."

"I am much obliged. My father's house is over the way. I think you asked me if you might pay for this dog? My answer is, No."

"There ain't nothing to pay," said Jim Akin. "Miss has took a fancy to the dog, and she is welcome to her."

"Do you mean to say that you will give me the dog as a present?"

"Certainly, Miss; and will swear to her agin all Christendom."

"I'll take it, Jim Akin," she said. "And I'll never pay one farthing for it, except in good-will. If I don't pay you in cash, I will pay you in kind. Let me give you one more chance—I will give you a five-pound note for this dog; I will go across the street and get it now."

"Won't take it, Miss. I'll take it out in good-will. The mistake as you gentry makes," continued Jim Akin, speaking sententiously, and looking at Mr. Morley, who certainly looked like a gentleman, "is this: You thinks we're for cash, and all cash; and it ain't so. *I've* got as much money as I want. You gentlemen as studies has got good words. Why can't you give us some of your good words now and again, in a friendly way, the same as I give she the little dog?"

"Well," said Rebecca, turning homeward with her new treasure in her arms, "all I can say is, that you shall always have good words from me; and so good-by. Mr. Morley, I have just been so cross with you. I am afraid you must think me very silly."

"On what grounds?"

"On the grounds of being very nearly crying for pity over a poor lonely little dog. If your life were as lonely as mine—"

"What then?" said Mr. Morley, as they crossed the street.

"Why then, I fancy, I may be wrong, but I *do* fancy that you are the sort of person who would be just as likely to make a goose of yourself over such a matter as me."

"That is not grammar, you know, as it stands," said Mr. Morley.

"Then let it be grammar as it sits," said Rebecca. "You know what I mean."

"I am afraid I do; and what is more and worse, I am afraid it is true."

"Then you *do* sometimes make a goose of yourself?"

"Have I not come to see you?"

"That is true enough. Talking of geese, what is the opinion of Pythagoras concerning water-fowl?"

"That a minister of the gospel had better mind his own business, and not come to visit houses where common stage-plays are read habitually."

"Only one single number of *Knight's Illustrated*, I give you my honor," said Rebecca. "*You* have read it, you know; at least, you seem pretty familiar with it. Did you *really* come to see me?"

"I did, indeed."

"I have leave to walk up and down the lane. Will you walk with me?"

Mr. Morley consented gladly.

"I want to talk to you very much, but about very many things. You seem to have had an education different to—to the men I have seen here. For instance, you know Shakspeare?"

"I know Shakspeare very well."

"I know nothing of him but this one play. And that is so wonderful—so utterly unlike, both in thought and diction, to any thing I have ever seen before, that I can nearly say it by heart. Are the other plays to be compared in goodness to this one?"

"Certainly. In perfect dexterity and elegance, I rank *Twelfth Night* as high as any; but for no other qualities. *Hamlet* is the finest of them all."

"And what is that about?"

"The old Calvinist business—the business without beginning and without end—which keeps so many preachers on their legs, for the simple reason that, let them turn it inside out as often as they will, there is no answer to it. *Hamlet*, with its beautiful language and deep thought, runs mainly on predestination, the permission of evil, and the responsibility in this world and in the next of bad or careless actions, committed, as it would seem, almost unavoidably."

"And how does Shakspeare get us out of the old difficulty, familiar enough to me, I am sure?" asked Rebecca.

"The characters all stab and poison one another," said Mr. Morley.

"Mark my words, Mr. Morley," said Rebecca, stopping short, and stroking the head of her little dog, who, under the impression that it had only been stolen once more in a different sort of way, was low in its little mind; "mark my words, Mr. Morley, that Shakspeare was a man not entirely deprived of understanding. I am aware that you people hate him, curse him from your pulpits, and so on. But there is something in the man."

"I never cursed him," said Morley. "I love him."

"You!" said Rebecca. "I never sat under you. The man whom you call your brother—the man whose opinions you are bound to indorse does, though. I mean the man Hagbut, for I have heard him."

CHAPTER XI.

HETTY'S LOVER.

"It is not so pleasant in here as in the lane," said Rebecca, leading the way in to their dull, narrow-windowed sitting-room. "This is the place where I am scolded and admonished. I sit here, do you see, and you sit there. Now, will you please begin and get it over."

"Can you suppose that I mean to scold you?" he said.

"I suppose that you have come commissioned by my father to see after my spiritual state," she replied. "Are you not Mr. Hagbut's successor? If so, I am afraid that you will have a thankless task."

"I assure you, on my honor," he said, eagerly, "that my visit is solely and entirely to you; that I dislike Mr. Hagbut; that I have no commission from your father whatever. May I go on? I am much older than you, and, God knows, I wish you well."

"If you put matters on those friendly grounds, I am sure that you may say what you like. If you intend to be truly my friend in a worldly point of view, I can meet you half-way, for I am sure I want one badly."

"We will sign no compact of friendship," he answered; "but you shall try me. I am an old widower of forty-two, and have a daughter nearly as old as you."

"A daughter!" said Rebecca. "I never heard of that before."

She blushed scarlet as she said it, for she betrayed the fact that he was interesting to her, and that she had inquired about him.

"Yes, I have a daughter," said Morley, stroking his chin. "Yes; quite so. Hetty (that is short for Hephsibah, not for Esther, you will understand) is nearly as old as you are, I should say."

"I suppose she is very fond of you?" said Rebecca, still in confusion.

"Why, yes," said Mr. Morley, still stroking his chin. "Hetty is very fond of me indeed. But I will show you how much I am inclined to put confidence in you, Miss Turner, by telling you that my dear daughter is not a popular person."

"Is she cross?" asked Rebecca.

"No, she's not cross. When I say that she is unpopular, I mean that she is unpopular among our religious connection, and—well—is a great stumbling-block with them."

"She seems to be very much in my condition, then," said Rebecca.

"Very much indeed," said Mr. Morley, the truth being far too great to be kept back. "Very much so."

"Did she ever run away and hide for three days, as I did?" said Rebecca.

Mr. Morley did not answer in speech at all, neither did he look at Rebecca at all. He only looked at space, with a compound expression in which there was, simply in a very slight movement of the mouth, a touch of humor, but no anger or sorrow. Rebecca began to have an intense desire to know the young lady, and said so.

"She would be highly flattered, I am sure," said Mr. Morley, "if I told her so; but I shall not do it, however. By-the-by, may I presume to be sufficiently in your confidence to ask a favor?"

"Provided it is not a guilty secret, of course," said Rebecca.

"But it is," said Mr. Morley. "Don't say any thing about my daughter up here. This part of our connection does not know any thing

about her. Even Hagbut keeps the dreadful secret, knowing that if any thing of her ways was known here, Mrs. Russel and Miss Soper would at once find out or invent quite enough about her to make me perfectly useless as a minister to this congregation, when he wanted my services, as he pretty often does. Besides, the girl is a connection of his. You will not mention her?"

"I will not, indeed," said Rebecca, pleased very much at being taken into any one's confidence and treated like a woman. "I am sure she is good."

"There is good in her somewhere," replied Morley, slightly showing his white teeth; "you will keep my secret, then, from your Russel and Soper; now let us talk of other matters. Your father looks very ill and worn."

"I have been behaving very ill, and have given him trouble. I ran away for three days to avoid doing something he had set his heart on my doing. I am very truly penitent for having given him anxiety, but I would do it again to-morrow; and so would your daughter."

"People don't run away from me," said Mr. Morley; "they are more apt to come after me, I think. While I have been sitting here, and looking out of the window, I have noticed one; he has found the house at last; he rings the bell; he asks for me; yes, and here your little maid shows him in."

And into the room came a magnificent young sailor, with the fresh, wild vitality of the sea shining in his bold brown eyes, showing in his noble free gait and bright free smile. A splendid apparition just risen from the ocean, in his ocean's garb; such a youth as Rebecca had never seen before. As one looked at him with traveled eyes, there came on one dim memories of peaceful seas among soft blue islands far away; of angry, cruel icebergs; of wild, horrible, staggering nights when ruin was abroad, and death looked with pale face over the steersman's shoulder at the dim-lit reeling binnacle. A youth who had looked steadily on death often, and would look again and yet again without terror, and die at the last fighting fiercely. Still young, handsome, and gentle.

The old narrow-windowed parlor seemed the darker and the dingier for his presence. With the exception of Rebecca herself, there had been nothing there so splendid for many years. Rebecca had never seen any thing like this; she had seen youth and vitality before, in Jim Akin and the like, but never any thing like this young man. She looked at him with keen curiosity and admiration; and Mr. Morley watched her.

"I have run you to earth, Sir," said the young sailor, who, by his dress, seemed of the superior mate class. "Hetty told me that you would be here."

"Chapter of accidents," said Mr. Morley. "What business was it of Hetty's, or of yours?"

"Hetty said that you were to come home to dinner; and, indeed, we want you."

"You want me a great deal, I have no doubt," said Mr. Morley.

"Indeed, we do want you very much," said the young sailor; "in fact, Hetty would not let me into the house until you come. She only—"

"Never mind that, Sir."

"Well, I won't," he said, laughing; "but you know that she will not take her pleasure without your sharing it. And if Miss Turner," he added, with a bright smile, "will spare you to us this one evening, we will try to make amends in future. May I be introduced to Miss Turner?"

"This, Miss Turner," said Mr. Morley, "is young Leonard Hartop. He is of the salt-water persuasion. The remarkable fact about him is, that he never sails in any kind of ship but what that ship meets with a very serious accident. Likewise, on the occasion of these accidents, some one else is always on the watch. I introduce him."

"I am delighted, I am sure," said Leonard Hartop, "to make Miss Turner's acquaintance. In what you may be allowed to call, on an occasion of this kind, the flowering vale of tears, there is little doubt that our acquaintance will be improved to mutual satisfaction. For you must not believe *him* about me, Miss Turner. His bark is worse than his bite. Nobody cares twopence-half-penny for him. Now, Mr. Morley, are you coming home to dinner?"

"Wait for me at the lane's end, boy, and I will come," said Mr. Morley; and the young sailor bowed and departed.

"What do you think of him?" he said to Rebecca, when he had gone.

"He is very splendid," said Rebecca, dreamily. "I have never seen any one like him."

"He is a splendid sailor," said Morley. "May I tell you a secret which would ruin us all if it was known?"

"There would be a little excitement about it," said Rebecca; "I think you had better tell me."

"Well, then, I will trust you. He is Hetty's lover."

"She must have good taste, then. I should not entirely break my heart if he was mine."

"No?" said Mr. Morley.

"Well, I don't know," said Rebecca. "That young man and I should never hit it off, you know. He seems as if he liked his own way."

"The most biddable lad going," said Mr. Morley.

"Then he wouldn't suit me. Hetty may have him. I want ordering about; I can't take care of myself. But, speaking to you as a minister, or, as the Papists call it, a father confessor, Mr. Morley, I confess to you that I could, with very small effort, have fallen in love with that young man. If Hetty has got him, let her keep him. I shall know Hetty one day, I see. For the present I have made my arrangements for marriage."

"I dare not ask what arrangements."

"I will save your cowardice, then; I have, for my own purposes, made it impossible for any man to marry me; and I am going to marry old Tibbey."

"Tibbey, the Primitive Methodist, in Leader Street? He is married already."

"Not him, but his wife. I am going to marry her. At all events, I am going to get out of this house in some way. I would to Heaven that I could turn Roman Catholic. *They* find a life and a business for women like me. If I could swallow their miserable superstitions I could join them to-morrow. Why do not you extreme Protestants make provision for women who are willing to devote their lives to God and to the

poor, as do the Papists? You cry out at the Papists getting so many converts among women; what is the real reason? These Papists, with a false, low, and I hope moribund, form of Christianity, are the only sect which offers a career to an ordinary and ill-educated woman. Whose fault is it that we are ill-educated? You have refused us education, and we are as clever as you. You teach us to play the piano. The Papists show us a suffering Christ through suffering humanity. They find a sphere for a woman—"

"Which you would occupy for possibly a week."

CHAPTER XII.

HAGBUT'S NEW INTENTIONS.

She saw no more of her two new acquaintances for nearly a fortnight, and the old life came back again with almost the old misery and dullness. Yet Rebecca was never exactly as she had been any more. She was more desperately unhappy—that I do not disguise—but her unhappiness now was of a different kind. It was active. Her old unhappiness was as that of one imprisoned in a living tomb from her birth, hopeless, and without any room for fancy, which is one of the greatest mitigators of human ills. She was very miserable again now, but only because dreams, now become possible to her, seemed unattainable. Before this she had no dreams at all: her life was merely a painful sleep. And now, also, she had a companion and a confidant, her little dog.

The man who has never known a woman who will confide to a baby or a dog matters which she would not confide to an intelligent being, must be unfortunate in his experiences. Poor Rebecca told her little Skye terrier a great many things about herself, in which she scarcely believed as to herself, and which she would have denied with the extremest scorn to any person in the world, unless possibly in deep distress to old Mrs. Tibbey.

She had broken all bounds for the first time in her life. In her desperation regarding her marriage to Mr. Hagbut, she had been forced into arms; into a thoroughly successful revolution. True, she had in her weariness come back, as it were, to Cæsarism; but it rests with the politicians to tell us whether the individual or the nation ever gets back into its old frame of mind again after one good taste of liberty. What has been done once may be done twice. The ruler of a once thoroughly revolutionized kingdom sits uneasy on his throne; and what is more to the purpose, the subject knows it. At least Rebecca did. And so now, when the house was dullest, and her father most disagreeable, instead of "wishing she was dead," or declaring that she would marry a coster-monger if he would only take her out of this, used milder formulas; only told her little dog that he would drive her to it again, he would: and that Mab and she and Mrs. Tibbey would go to Ramsgate, and stay there altogether next time; and live on shrimps, and keep a nice little oyster shop, and never go to chapel any more. And if that nasty tiresome Hetty was near, Mab should bark at her.

This babyish nonsense was very good for her. She had had too little of it in her childhood; books like Hans Andersen's had never been seen in that house. It was well for her that she had still child enough left in her after her embittered life only to talk to her little innocent dog in a petulant childish way about Hetty; for she might have talked in a very different one a little time before. Yet one thing she told her dog now, but which she never confessed to herself, was that she hated Hetty.

Hetty the unknown, Hetty the innocent. It was surely unreasonable.

It would be merely confusion of counsel to try and account for it as she did. That Hetty was free; that she could come and go; that she had a father who loved her; and was not watched by two pernicious old trots (meaning Mrs. Russel and Miss Soper); she did not believe in all that herself. Hetty was welcome to all that. She had been inclined to admire Hetty, until Mr. Morley, for reasons of his own, had told her that the young sailor Hartop was her lover.

She had not cared at the time; if he and Hetty had come arm in arm, the next day, and made love before her, she would not have cared much, more particularly if Mr. Morley had come too. But this grand young sailor had left his image on a late awakened and fully developed mind, and it would not go. He was the first really splendid man she had ever seen.

And he had appeared, only to draw her only friend, Mr. Morley, away from her. They had left *her* at once, to go after this Hetty, and all their schemes, and goings on down at Limehouse, the gate of freedom: for you might get on board a ship in Limehouse, and you might sail away any where—to the happy islands in the Western Sea, where there was no chapel-going, or tea-meeting, or Sunday-school, all of which Mr. Morley wished to establish there; or even further, to those islands where you could do as you pleased, and escape the consequences of your own actions; in which islands Mr. Morley did not believe. (This was, of course, only said to the little dog.) But even to her sister, Carry, she grumbled, after a few days. She told her that she thought Mr. Morley had whisked himself off with his young friend rather unceremoniously.

"I am glad to hear he has been here," said Carry.

"Yes; he came to see me. And I should like him to come again. But the young sailor, to whom his daughter is engaged, came and carried him off."

"Mr. Morley has no daughter," said Carry.

"Indeed, but he has though," said Rebecca. "And I wish he hadn't."

"Dearest Rebecca," said Caroline, with just such tact as she had gathered from her station, and her school, "believe a tender sister, when she tells you that Mr. Morley has no family."

"But I tell you he has. Hetty was alive a week ago; bother her."

"You are in a perfect dream, my dear sister," said Carry. "Mr. Morley is perfectly unencumbered, and his prospects are, in a pecuniary point of view, very good indeed. I give you my *honor* he has no daughter. I tell you, you have been dreaming."

"*That* is true enough," said Rebecca. "I have been dreaming a deal too much. But who told you he had no daughter?"

"Mr. Hagbut, to-night, at Miss Soper's."

"How did he come to say it there?" said Rebecca, who was beginning to get a little uneasy about this mysterious Hetty's legal relation to Mr. Morley.

Carry was a certain kind of British woman, who when she saw occasion would walk clean through half a dozen quickset hedges, without, as vulgar people say, winking her eye. She did so on this occasion, as on many others.

"The fact of the matter is, my dear Rebecca, that Mr. Hagbut has announced his intention to several mutual friends, of paying his addresses to me. He has not committed himself to me in any way as yet; he has not sufficiently studied my character. But he has said, with a view of my hearing it at second-hand, that if I should be found worthy of his great position, and if he sees hopes of forming my character to his standard, he will overlook the disgrace which one member of our family has brought on it; and—"

"He is rapid in his determinations," said Rebecca, quietly.

"He is very determined. He is a man to be obeyed. But this is a little past the matter. His opinion is that Mr. Morley is very much inclined to marry you, in spite of all that has happened."

"Yes," said Rebecca, very quietly.

"Indeed he thinks so," said Carry; "and we all rejoiced with a great joy. I consider, that if you are careful, such a thing might be. And in the course of conversation I asked if he had any family; and he said that there was a daughter, but that she was dead."

"He meant dead in trespasses and sins, you know," said Rebecca.

"He said dead," said Carry. "Now you know the whole truth, my dear."

Burning lava over boiling water makes a good explosion, as geologists tell us. There were all the elements of it in Rebecca's heart. She could have killed them all with burning words. For them to *dare*, after her resolution, to buy and sell her like this. The way in which the crust of respectability forms quickly over the lava of revolution is what drives some men, who will not look to the great cyclical advance of matters, mad. And really, Charles the Second and Dryden, as successors and apparently results of Cromwell and Milton, is a bitter pill for a Whig. Men, maddened with this view of things, try to assassinate innocent sovereigns. Can we wonder that Rebecca felt a strong inclination to box her sister's ears?

Only for one moment. She was a clear-hearted woman, with all her faults. She saw her own sister before her, and all her little petty woes and wrongs were forgotten. Easily forgotten, for she had freed herself. Instead of giving way to ill-temper, she gave way to good; and, kneeling before her sister, said:

"Carry, sister! we have always been good friends. In Heaven's name have nothing to do with that man. Are you forced? *I* was forced; but I beat them, the mean tattlers and time-servers. Do as I did if you hate it. Come away as I did, sister; and see what the world is out of this miserable lane. I will never leave you, dear; no more will Elizabeth Tibbey; no more will Mab. Fly from it, dear, with me. We could keep a little shop, or any thing: Mr. Tibbey would tell us. Or we would go to Mr. Morley, and he would tell us what to do. But oh, that man, Carry! There is time to save yourself; in Heaven's name think what you are doing."

Rebecca's wild appeal failed absolutely. Carry's mind was too well formed. Rebecca's appeal to her, beautiful in its affectionate unselfishness, if in nothing else, was to her hideous and amorphous—shapeless to her: her sister was a woman with a wild, ill-regulated mind: an object of pity. Yet, in her reply, she unconsciously allowed that there was reason in Rebecca's wild plea to her; for, instead of showing pity, she showed resentment. And Rebecca had so nearly won, that this resentment took the form of anger: anger expressed as she had heard it expressed in her family, a little coarsely.

"You fool, get up, and don't kneel to me; kneel to your Maker. You are the plague of our lives. When I am married to him you will always be held over my head like a whip. The old business was just hushed up, when you must break out. Get up."

She got up at once, but she smiled kindly, too. "You will be sorry for these words, Carry, dear, long after I have forgotten them."

"I know I shall, you wicked thing!" said Carry, sobbing bitterly. "Why did you tempt me to say them?"

"Because I did not like to see one I love marry a man utterly beneath her, and utterly unworthy of her."

Whereupon, poor old Carry gathered up her skirts, and walked through another quickset hedge, consisting of Mr. Hagbut's virtues, through which we will not follow her.

CHAPTER XIII.

A FRANK EXPLANATION.

When the sisters had parted Rebecca was very angry again. For them to have dared to use her name like this once more. "Still the question arises," she said, "is it not all their own inconceivable folly? Mr. Morley is far too much of a gentleman to have spoken to any of *them*, at all events, before he spoke to me. He is inclined to like me, and I am fond enough of him; but he does not admire me."

Her father came in, and without looking at him, she said: "Has Mr. Morley spoken to you about any intentions of his with regard to me, Sir?"

"Certainly not!" said her father. "Do you mean matrimonial intentions? Why, you have scarcely seen him; and if Morley had any such intentions, he, with his breeding, would most surely have made himself safe with you in the first instance. Tell us the story, Rebecca; do not let us mistake one another again. Has he shown you any attentions?"

"None whatever, except those of an interested friend. He has been very kind to me."

"Then how has this report come about?" asked her father. And Rebecca simply told him what Carry had told her.

"So you see," she added, "that my name is the common talk of Miss Soper's tea-table in connection with his."

"What an abominable shame! *Who* said it?"

"Mr. Hagbut."

"Oh, I see," said Mr. Turner. "Yes, yes! quite so. My dear daughter, I have reason to believe *now* that Mr. Morley does really more or less admire you, and that Mr. Hagbut has remarked it."

"Am I never to be let alone?" cried Rebecca.

"Do not interrupt; listen—open your eyes. I have reason now to believe that Hagbut at least suspects that, in course of time, Mr. Morley may come to admire you, and that he has, knowing your proud and uncontrollable temper, put this report about in such a way as may set you utterly against Mr. Morley."

"What on earth is it to him?" said Rebecca.

"Between five and six thousand pounds, my dear. If you marry so well as Morley—marry, in fact, a gentleman of respectability and strength of character, like him—you will have the same fortune as your sister. If you remain single at my death, you will have one hundred a year; if you make a foolish match, you will have eighteen shillings a week, tied up to you, and payable weekly. Hagbut thinks that if he can in any way get rid of this match, he will net certainly five, and possibly seven thousand pounds."

"He is a villain," said Rebecca, with singular emphasis; "and I always told you so."

"This is rather sharp practice, certainly," said Mr. Turner. "Now, I may have made such sharp practice, or I may not. I can't say. I meet and am friendly with men who would do such things, and I am never angry with them. But I am angry now. For him to put his pudding brains against mine! Oh, Master Hagbut, the Pope shall be the richer for that odd money sooner than you. For him to come lawyer. And over me!"

"Why is my sister to be sacrificed to such a wretch?"

"He is not a wretch. She will lick his feet, and he will let her, and be kind to her. It is the same between priests and women in all churches. I myself would lick the dust of the shoes of any man who could assure me of heaven—still more will a frightened and ignorant woman. He will be very kind to her, and she will adore him. Have you been saying any thing to her against him?"

"I fear a great deal," said Rebecca, in downright honesty, expecting an outburst.

"Do not do so again, my dear Rebecca. Nothing can prevent their being husband and wife, and so sow no seeds of discord. Remember that, child. This has not been a happy house; do not use your power to make another such."

What between her father's kindness, and her ideal future of poor Carry, it was through tears that she promised that she would not.

"Do you like Mr. Morley?" he asked.

"Yes, very much indeed. But I could never think of marrying him."

"Don't let us deceive one another, Rebecca. Is there any one else?"

"No," she said at once. Who could there be? She was not allowed to go out of the lane, and never saw any one. But she said it with so poor an air that her father looked suspiciously at her, and said:

"Well, my girl, we had a great fight, and you won. Perhaps I am older and wiser than when I knew your mother. At all events, if I made errors with her I do not wish to repeat them with you. I have told you how you will be situated as regards money-matters. Further than that, no more constraint shall be put upon you than is now. Do you understand?"

"I am thankful."

"Keep your ears open and your attention awake, and never repeat what I am going to tell you. When you brought disgrace on this house as you did, that fellow Hagbut came to me to break off his engagement with you, as he was almost bound to do. But the way he did it showed me he was a rascal and a sneak, every inch of him. By Heaven! he little knew how near he was being pitched into the lane."

"And yet poor Carry—" began Rebecca.

"Hold your tongue! you have enough to do without minding Carry. Mind yourself, and listen to me. You say there is no one has your heart; I ask no further. But mind, if there were, and Hagbut knew it, he will, if he is likely to be entirely displeasing to me, throw him against you."

Rebecca sat perfectly silent, and her father saw that there was more than he cared to know. At last she said, "Please, father, has Mr. Morley a daughter?"

"He may have a dozen for aught I know. I only know his eminent character; I know nothing of his domestic life, except that he is a widower."

"Because he told me he had, and told me much about her. And Hagbut denies that there is any such daughter."

"Hagbut is probably overreaching himself in some way," said Mr. Turner, coolly. "Suppose, for an instance, that Morley had a daughter who had done him discredit, such as yourself, you know, he might possibly be scheming to keep her as long as possible in the back-ground, and make anger between you and Morley. In which, you see, he has already failed, for Morley has told you all about her. Mind, once more, in conclusion; if there is any man of whom I should disapprove in this case, Hagbut *thinks* he wins £8000 by your marrying him, and he will contrive that you should meet him. And so, good-night."

CHAPTER XIV.

HARTOP.

MAB, the little dog, used to bark furiously at strangers in general, and regarded both Carry and Mr. Turner in that light. So, when, two days after the last conversation, Rebecca was told that there was a gentleman to see her, Mab barked all the way down stairs, but on getting to the sitting-room door began to whine and scratch joyously, so that Rebecca thought it was Mr. Morley.

But it was not; it was only the magnificent young sailor, Hartop. She was sorry that he had come; and, without perceiving her cold reserved air, he came frankly and joyously up to her, and took her hand.

"I could not get to you a moment before; I have been unloading all the day long, ever since we were in port till to-day. My uncle, Mr. Hagbut, suggested to me that it would be only kind if I were to come and tell you about those two."

Her father's words came on her with a shock. This, then, was the man selected by Mr. Hagbut as the one most likely to make mischief between her and her father. The man of all others the most dangerous.

"Yet how could he have known *that?*" It was indeed a puzzle, if it were not an accident. All this went through her mind so quickly that she did not keep him waiting for his answer. She said, promptly, "What two?"

"Why Mr. Morley and Hetty, to be sure," he replied, wondering.

"Then there *is* a Hetty?" said Rebecca, with animation.

"There was three days ago," he said, laughing; "and I think you will find a young person of her appearance, and claiming her name, walking about with her father in the Boompjes of Rotterdam this afternoon."

"She is a good sailor, I dare say," said Rebecca.

"It would be a queer thing for her if she wasn't," said Hartop, with another look of wonder. "But I didn't come here to talk about *her;* I should talk all the afternoon if I began about *her*. Do allow me to assure you that of all the pretty, innocent, little birds that fly over the tropic sea, she is the prettiest and most innocent; and of all the brave hearts which beat truest and most steady in the worst gale that ever blew, hers is the truest and steadiest. They will set you against her, but don't believe them."

"Why should they set me against her?" asked Rebecca.

"She broke through rules, you know," said he, seriously. "If she and I had been what we are now, I should most likely have been against it. But that was afterward. We won't talk of her; you shall judge her for yourself. Now I want to ask you to walk with me. Do come. It is the only civility I can show you."

"I will go and ask my father," she said, and so left him.

Mr. Turner was sitting alone in his bedroom, brooding in his chair, and hearing some one coming, caught up his Bible and bent his head over it: a fact made patent to Rebecca by seeing that he held it upside down.

"Father," she said, quietly, as soon as she had shut the door, "the young man you warned me of has come from Mr. Hagbut; and I have come to ask your leave to go out to walk with him for an hour or so."

"No!" cried Mr. Turner, shutting up his Bible. "Why, this is as good as a play. Tell me all about it. Who is he?"

"He is young Hartop, a sailor; Mr. Hagbut's nephew."

"Hagbut knows something against him, then, or—stay, let us condemn no man—he has calculated on my having objections to your marrying a sailor; that is it. Now, my girl, let us have it all out; there is more to come. I have not watched witnesses' eyes for nothing all my life."

"You remember that Mr. Hagbut denied that Mr. Morley had a daughter."

"Certainly."

"Well, he has such a daughter, and her name is Hetty; and this young man is engaged to be married to her. And he describes her as the most perfect being ever seen. I don't know how I know it, but I do know this—if any thing were to come between this splendid Hetty and himself he would be a lost man."

"Then you see my theory of her being disreputable, and of Hagbut's keeping her in the background to make a quarrel on the score of want of confidence between you and Morley, falls to the ground. I was under the impression that, if there were such a girl, Hagbut would advise Morley to keep her in the back-ground until you were well committed to him, and then reveal her disreputable existence by means of one of those savory old catamarans—vessels, I mean. But this theory falls to the ground now, if she is what the young man says she is. She can not have done any thing."

"She has done *something*, though, and something rather strong. Her own father hinted it to me, and her own devoted lover confirmed it. I don't want to know what it is, but the young man who is to marry her hoped just now that the good ladies, whom you so well describe as savory catamarans, would not prejudice me against her. He says she has broken through rules."

"I wish *I* could," said poor Mr. Turner; "but I am too old. Go on, Rebecca, we have had less than half at present. You have never got together evidence yet, my good girl, and so you can't tell by a witness's eyes whether the story is all told."

Rebecca laughed, and, for the first time in her life, sat down by her father's knee, and leaned her head against it.

"You are right," she went on. "Do you remember that you said—well, if there was any young man, with whom I was in danger, who was disagreeable to you, that Hagbut would throw him against me. He has done so."

"Is there danger with this young man, then? Where could you have seen him?"

"In your own house; here, in the presence of Mr. Morley. And there *was* danger about him. And I want to go out a-walking with him. And you are going to let me."

"Then there is no danger now?"

"Not a bit," said Rebecca. "He has blown all my fancies to the winds in ten minutes by his clear manly frankness, just as I created them in ten minutes for myself. No danger at all."

"That is well," said Mr. Turner, noticing that, now his hand was very near his daughter's beautiful hair, there was a strange pleasure in passing his hand through it. "But have you ever been indiscreet about this young man: to Carry, for instance?"

"I could not tell Carry what I had never confessed to myself," said Rebecca. "Yet it would seem as if the man had second-sight."

"Carry possibly gave him some hint."

"But she could not have done so, father. She never heard of him in her life."

"Then I will tell you what it is, my child. It is only an old dodge of priestcraft, which is now called Jesuitism; as if a real Jesuit would have made such a risk. He sent him here on a chance of confusing counsel, finding himself possible to make the most likely hash of matters, and pick his own interest out—that is all; but Mr. Morley has put you on your guard. Nothing more than that." And, indeed, there was nothing more; for Hagbut was quite as much fool as knave.

"Well, he has failed," said Mr. Turner. "Where is the young man? Let us see him."

Rebecca, rising, reminded her father that the young man had been waiting down stairs above half an hour; and they went to see him.

The young man, splendid as he was in beauty and stature, accustomed to bully all sailors and officials in every part of the globe, was terribly frightened at this dry old English attorney. He and Jack Hord (of Wilmington, U. S.; the New York branch of the family, lately enriched, call themselves Howard) had with their stretchers alone kept the boat free from the swarm of monkey-like Portuguese, nearly two hundred strong, gesticulating and showing knives, while the rest of their comrades were half-persuading, half-carrying, that very indiscreet young man, Cornelius Kelly, back to the boat; Cornelius not being in the least drunk, but having been insulted by being called Lutherano, to which he could only answer by howling, "Mono! Morto!" That had been a very dangerous disturbance, as dangerous a one as Belem Castle sees often in these peaceful times. Also this young man had been in other rows of a different kind. His strong lungs and his commanding presence had brought him into trouble before now. While he was in the service of a small house, in a screw steamer off the west coast of South America, he, noticing the barometer and the weather generally, had given orders to get up steam and put to sea, the captain being still on shore, and he dreading a gale. There was no gale, only an earthquake, and he proved clearly that the ship would have been thrown a mile inland, if he had not given these orders; but the captain got him dismissed. In short, this young man Hartop had been in all kinds of trouble and bother, and had never yet shown himself afraid of any one. When his certificate was in question he was as bold and as free before the court as any man. But this dry old lawyer frightened him to death. For a guilty man is frightened before a lawyer, and a sailor hates and dreads one. I think a real sailor fears nothing but a lawyer. What must a guilty sailor feel?

And Hartop was a deeply guilty man. To the people he loved and trusted more than any in the world, to Hartop and Hetty, Mr. Morley had confided the fact that he was going to ask Rebecca to be his wife, if things looked in any way promising; and had at the same time begged them never to confide the fact to any human being. The poor girl must not be put in a false position again. So young Hartop, being full of kindliness and happiness, did not know how much his future father-in-law had said to Rebecca, and was under the general impression that old Turner was a Turk—with a large dowry ready, provided no indiscretion was committed—who knew nothing about the arrangement. And also this Turk was a lawyer, a creature worse than any Turk. So the young man, treading on molten iron, bowed down, terrified, before Mr. Turner.

Mr. Turner could not have known this, but he might have guessed it possible. He was happy, as far as he could be, but the chance of bullying a young sailor was too good to be lost. He did not reassure that young man at all.

"How do you do, Sir? My daughter informs me that you wish to take her out for a walk."

"If it met your views, Sir," said young Hartop.

"The question is, whether it meets my daughter's views?" said Mr. Turner, grimly. "Our neighbors are censorious. But if she wants to go, she can."

"I do want to go, pa," she said.

"Then get your bonnet on," he added, and followed her.

"Rebecca," he said to her, following her into her room, "there is no harm in that lad, my child. That lad is in love, and not with you."

"I know that," said Rebecca, cheerfully.

"Then look here," said her father; "don't cross-question him about this daughter of Morley's, this Hetty. It is not fair on him. If she has been a fool, he won't care much to tell you about it. Are you *quite* safe, old girl?"

"Quite safe, pa," said Rebecca. And somehow they kissed one another. And Rebecca said, "Pa, dear, why are we not always like this?"

And he said, "Let us try to be."

And so ended the incipient romance of the young sailor Hartop. At least as regards Rebecca.

CHAPTER XV.

REBECCA'S VOYAGE WITH HIM, AND WHAT THEY SAW, AND WHAT SHE SAW WHEN THEY CAME HOME.

This was the occasion of Rebecca's first voyage. And she took her voyage in the sole company of the young man whom she had considered to be dangerous to her peace of mind. And it is singular that he was not now—now that the brooding engendered by the house and by the lane were no more—no longer dangerous at all; but that she wanted to talk about Hetty, but did not do so because he did not; and that he did not talk about Hetty because he thought her a dangerous subject. For Hetty had broken rules. He talked about the sea, and about the wild free lands that lay beyond Limehouse. He asked her if she were a good sailor, and she answered that she supposed she was no worse than another, and repeated her question, "Was Hetty a good sailor?" and he repeated his previous mysterious answer, "It would be a queer thing, surely, if she were not."

The wind was free and fresh from the south, and the little steamer went fast and busy from wharf to wharf down the river. Under the bright sun, and the nimble pure air, and the changing of the scene, Rebecca grew happy, and showed her happiness by a thoughtful silence.

"Are you comfortable, Miss Turner?" said Hartop.

"I am more than comfortable. I am perfectly happy. I can not tell why, but it is so. It was wonderfully kind of you to bring me here. I have never seen any thing like this before in my life. This is most wonderful and most beautiful."

"It is as good as carrying the northeast trade over the line to hear you say so," replied Hartop.

Said Rebecca, "I wish we could go to some place where we could see which way the ship was going."

And so Hartop carried her to the front of the

little vessel, and set her there. And she said, "Would you be so good as not to talk to me? You sailors smoke your pipes, I know. Would you kindly smoke yours now, and let me sit in silence?"

Hartop sat on the deck at her feet to leeward and smoked. The little throbbing boat carried them both past the wharves and the city toward the sea; she sitting in a Cashmere shawl like a figure-head. From time to time she said to him, "Are you tired?" and he said, "No. He was very happy. Why should he be tired?"

"Because you are not talking to any body," said Rebecca. "I don't wish to talk; and I am afraid that I am bad company."

"You are very good and comfortable company," said Hartop. "The worst mate of all is a sulky mate, and the next worst is a jawing mate. I took you out for pleasure, not for jaw. For instance, where were you when you spoke?"

"I was at the island of St. Borondon, in the Atlantic. The island where all things go right for evermore," said Rebecca. "Where were you?"

"I don't know that island," said Hartop. "For my part, I was crawling along in a fruit brig under Teneriffe, and thinking how Hetty got on in that short-chopping North Sea. Break your slate, you know, and tilt the fragment up in the window above the level of your eye, and you get Teneriffe. But lor, *you* can't dream what Teneriffe is. And still less Tristan d'Acunha. And still less the approach to the Australian shore. No man knows what that is till he has seen it. Did you ever see the west front of Wells cathedral?"

"No. Why?"

"Because it is like Madeira, on the Atlantic side," said Hartop. "But what can you know about islands? You have never seen any."

Rebecca had not.

"Islands are like cathedrals. Have you ever seen a cathedral?"

Only St. Paul's, it seemed, with a distant view of Westminster.

"Mr. Morley told us you had seen nothing," said this young man. "Now, islands and cathedrals are one and the same thing. They are the cathedrals of the wide, cruel sea, and God Almighty built them with his own kind hands. The cathedrals ashore were built by the priests: the cathedrals of the sea were built by God Almighty's own hands. Think of that, Miss Rebecca. And what is the object of a cathedral? Peace. I have sailed with all creeds, and they all ask for peace; and I tell them all that after the wild wandering sea you get peace on an island. I wish we could go to an island—us four together."

Rebecca was too far in dream-land to ask him what he meant by "us four." The river grew yet and yet more busy, and at last the tall masts in the pool came in sight, the nimble little steamer stopped, and Hartop aroused her by saying, "Will you go back now, or where will you go?"

"Take me on toward the sea, and let me be still," she said. And in a few minutes the dextrous Hartop had her on board a boat bound for Gravesend, and they throbbed along on their strange voyage once more.

As the ships grew larger and larger her eyes seemed to expand. Hartop looked on her with that strange reverential superstition which the highest class of sailor has toward a beautiful woman. The old sailors' fancy is that a ship in full sail, a field of corn, and a beautiful woman are the three finest things in nature; and the reason they will give you for this is, that all of these three things shadow out the hope of increase. For my own part, I know many less beautiful superstitions; but that part of it which relates to the beautiful woman was very much in bold Hartop's soul that day, as he sat looking stealthily at her, in the light of his future mother-in-law, thinking that she was really after all worthy of even Mr. Morley; and, moreover, turning over the wonderful fact that she had never seen Hetty in her life. *She* spoke at last.

"Are these the real ships that go down into the great deep sea?"

"Yes," he said, eagerly. "There they are, Miss Turner, ready for any thing, from Cameroons to Sydney. See that long-bodied, low-lying screw there. Very sister"—he succeeded in saying—"ship that Hetty was wrecked in two years ago."

"Has Hetty been shipwrecked, then?" said Rebecca.

Hartop looked at her wonderingly for an instant, but thought, "She knows nothing. It is for Morley to tell her."

"Yes, she has been wrecked three times now. That last time was the time when the Queen wrote to her and sent her the Bible. I have often laughed when I told her that I would never sail in the same ship with her."

"Wrecked three times!" said Rebecca, half-awakened. "Was Mr. Morley ever wrecked with his daughter?".

"Not likely," said Hartop. "The Lord don't cast his best tools aside like that. It is easy enough, Miss Turner, for a game and plucky girl like Hetty to stand on a cracking and bursting deck, with the cruel sea hurling around her, no hope of life, and keep a parcel of women from going quite mad, by singing of hymns to them, and by telling them of Christ who walked on the waters, as Hetty did; why, that is a thing any woman could do. You could do it if you gave your mind to it. Het did that, and Het is a brick. But she didn't do this. It took a man to do this. Mr. Morley went alone into the rowdiest drinking-house in the Nevada track in the old times in California. Taylor himself had warned him that he was a dead man if he went, for to refuse drink in that house meant death. Morley laughed at Taylor himself, went into the grog-shop, was challenged to drink, and then cast the liquor on the ground, and before he came out of that grog-shop had given them a piece of his mind. Taylor said that he would not have done it. What do you think of that, for instance?"

"I am all abroad," said Rebecca. "It would seem that Hetty is brave, but that Mr. Morley is braver."

"There is no man alive like Mr. Morley," said Hartop. "He don't know what fear is."

"Let us talk about these ships," said Rebecca, "and leave Mr. Morley to take care of himself."

So he told her all about them—where they sailed to, how strangely they leaped and plunged in their agony at sea, for all they were so still and silent now. This one had come from sliding

on slowly and silently among towering icebergs, the one beside her was fresh from the palm-fringed quays of the Pacific. So he sat in her gentle loyalty and talked to her, she speaking seldom, but sitting wrapped in herself: he never tiring of talking to her and sitting near her. Little did she dream of the tie which bound him so closely to her; little did she know what sacred and deeply-loved being she was to him; how he and the two others had talked about her hour by hour; how deeply important she was to three people: one of whom she had never seen, one whom she had seen but twice, and a third she had scarcely seen half a dozen times. These kind souls had been preparing a home for her in their hearts, and she knew not of it.

It was only when he left her, very late, they having come from Woolwich by railway, at her father's door, that she appreciated how utterly she had lost herself. "I fear he will scold me," she thought, "and our new-made confidence will suffer;" but the maid only heard that he was busy, and that Miss Caroline was in her room. Somehow the company of this most excellent and most admirable Carry did not seem in any way to suit this young lady who had been wool-gathering in the moon all day; she took off her hat, and catching up her little dog walked slowly along the hall.

When she was nearly opposite her father's room-door she put down her little dog and took off her hat, letting her hair fall down by accident. Mab immediately began to run round and round, barking, after her tail.

The noise instantly aroused Mr. Turner, for coming out quickly and closing the door behind him, he found himself face to face, under the light in the passage, with a beautiful and noble-looking woman, draped nearly from head to foot in a Cashmere shawl, with part of her hair fallen down—a woman who looked very quiet, still, and calm, and whom he recognized, to his own astonishment, as his own daughter, Rebecca.

He had never realized her before. He had never truly trusted her before. There was something now in the calm, strong, gentle face which made him see an ally, an ally worth all the world. Mr. Turner had been something else before he had been converted, it seemed; for the first real word of confidence he ever uttered to his daughter smelled very strongly of the evil odor of the old Adam.

"Where the devil have you been all this time?"

"I have been down among the ships with Hetty's lover, Tom Hartop," she said. "I am very sorry, father; but I was so happy—"

"Hang Tom Hartop," said Mr. Turner, in a whisper. "Come in here, and hold your tongue. I want your help, child; take up your dog and nurse it—it will be an excuse for not talking."

"Hetty is brave, but Morley is braver," was what she thought. "Let me see what I can do." So she took up Mab, stilled her and passed in, to find two men in her father's room, whom she had never seen before.

The first her eye rested on was a gallant-looking young gentleman, Lord Ducetoy. She had seen a specimen of his class before, had been with one all day, indeed; so her eyes turned to the other, who was a man the like of which she had never seen before, and which, I hope, we may never see.

A noble-looking old gentleman. In his dress, in his hands, in his complexion, there was Gentleman written with no unerring hand. Yet sunk in a heap on a chair, with limp limbs, bowed head, and an appealing, whipped-hound look in his handsome face. She had never seen such a fine gentleman before; and she had never seen such a hopeless look of humble pleading woe. Mr. Spicer the sweep on Sunday, or Jim Akin the coster-monger, looked grander than he.

"My daughter," said Mr. Turner, as he brought in Rebecca. "Lord Ducetoy, Sir Gorhambury Townsend."

"You have brought in the young lady to put a stop to this conversation, I suppose?" said Sir Gorhambury.

"That is the case exactly," said Mr. Turner. But Lord Ducetoy and Sir Gorhambury, both heated, continued it.

"I never harmed you, Ducetoy. That protest from the bank only came from one of the rascally directors. Why should you serve me thus?"

"Because, uncle, as I have told you before, I do not desire that my plate, jewels, and bonds should go in the bankruptcy."

"And as I have told you before, the mere redeposit of them would just enable us to pull through. If the chattels and papers so long left in our hands were now deposited again, it would give confidence in quarters where we want confidence, and pull us through."

"Uncle, the utmost I will do will be to pay in £500, and not withdraw my account."

"I have never, I swear solemnly," said Sir Gorhambury, "done any thing to injure any human being. I worked hard at that bank, and we sold it for £200,000. Since then I have been living as a country squire. By my connection with religion I attracted deposits from Christian widows and orphans. It is not I only that am ruined, for my estates will not one-half stand the drain on them. I could stand an almshouse myself (God knows, I wish I were alone with God in one now), but all these widows and orphans are to sink into poverty through their trust in me. I profess, and I ruin widows and orphans, all because my nephew refuses to deposit papers and jewels which would pull us through. And my poor son. Oh, my poor son! And so you won't pull us through as you might? The mere fact of your moving them to another banker's is ruin to us."

"I tell you, uncle, that I will not remove my account."

"Your account. Our only assets are your mortgages. These papers, you have moved them to another banker's. Where are they then?" said the old man, with his first flush of fire. Turner answered:

"Sir Gorhambury, the papers to which you allude are in a place which renders it unlikely that they will ever be used in a criminal court against any one. I am sorry to close the conversation in this way, but consider it closed."

Sir Gorhambury said not one word, but rose firmly and calmly, and walked toward the door. Lord Ducetoy said, "Good-night, uncle," but the old man never answered him. Mr. Turner was going to escort him to the door, when he sudden-

ly found himself confronted by his daughter, with a candle in her hand, who boldly and firmly put her hand upon his chest and pushed him back. Saying, in a whisper,

"That is a broken man; he wants a woman with him." Turner bowed his head reverentially and went back. Sir Gorhambury went down stairs with Rebecca, holding the light.

"You have lost your money, Sir, have you not?" she said.

He answered, "Yes."

"A good many people who come here have lost their money," she said, briskly. "I wish I had lost mine; all the trouble I ever had in my life has been through the money my father is going to leave me when he dies, which will be the bitterest day of *my* life. Keep up your spirits, and laugh about it."

"You can not laugh after seventy, Madam," said the old man; yet she fancied that he walked out into the dim dark night more cheerfully for what she had said.

CHAPTER XVI.

A CONFIDENCE OF THREE.

When she came back Lord Ducetoy was walking up and down, and saying:

"It would have been perfectly monstrous for me to do what he proposed. I might have ruined myself, and gone to Canada again to help him; but to help an unlimited company?—no. You will continue your trust, for friendship's sake. Ah, here is my cousin. Cousin, if you were engaged to the finest girl in the whole world—who, I am happy to say, has not ten pounds—you would scarcely put a considerable part of your property into bankruptcy to please your uncle!"

"As I never was engaged to the finest girl in the world," said Rebecca; "and as I have no uncle, I can not answer the question, Lord Ducetoy. But it is supper-time, and I am very hungry; for I have spent most of the day among the ships down the river, in company with a very handsome young sailor; a man I am getting more and more fond of every time I see him—a young man who will be fairly in a position to marry after his next voyage."

If Lord Ducetoy had lived only in England he might have mistaken her. But he had been to the Westward, and had seen what pure and true gallantry may exist between man and woman, with the most entire freedom of innocent speech. Mr. Turner's brow grew dark when she said this. Lord Ducetoy laughed, and said, "You are bridemaid, then; and who is the bride?"

"Hetty Morley is the bride," said Rebecca, at supper, with her eyes wide open; "but what *she* is I can not conceive. She has done something extraordinary; has pulled down the pillars of the Philistines' temple in some way. But I want to speak about the old man whom I saw out. Be tender with him, you two. I mean my Lord, and Father."

"Believe me we will, Miss Turner," said Lord Ducetoy. "Believe me that we mean nothing else. He will never want for any thing he has been accustomed to till the day of his death. Tell my cousin that."

"Why do you call me cousin?" said Rebecca.

"Your mother was my first cousin," said he.

And soon after that she went away; but her father told her not to go to bed. Lord Ducetoy said, when she had gone away,

"What a splendid creature! How have I angered her?"

"By mentioning your cousinship, my lord. In our case our family connection with yours has not been happy; the girl knows something of it, or her instincts have told her. And instead of harking back to the traditions of your order, or staying in the respectable mean of ours, she has cast herself into utter Radicalism, which has given me great trouble in my religious connection. The girl don't know a duchess from a dustman's wife."

"Well, I got the same way of thinking in the prairies," said the honest young fellow.

"Yes, there is no Radical like a young Whig," said Turner, with a sneer.

"I shall get it all knocked out of me as I grow up, then," said Lord Ducetoy.

"Undoubtedly," said Turner, suddenly and keenly, some old gleam of Puritan democracy flashing out irrepressibly. "In your class the metal never rings true. It can't. Every word you say is said with a view to excuse your order, to excuse its mere existence."

"We are afraid of your attacking our property, you see," said the youth; "you democrats are always holding that over us; that is what makes Tories. It is odd that a man like you, who have made so much money by the mere legal waifs and strays of our family property, should be a Radical. *I* am. I have land in Canada, and land in the United States; and, if you don't know it, I can tell you that society in New England is much pleasanter than I can find in this cockneyfied England."

Mr. Turner was not prepared with arguments. This young lord was mad. *At that time.* He would not be considered quite so mad now. The idea of a man of many acres, and high position, craving for the rest and peace of pure democracy was horrifying to him. His religion was tolerably democratic, certainly; but he had never reduced it to practice.

There was one thing he knew, however, and practiced too, which he had got from his religion—mercy.

Rebecca was waiting for him in his bedroom, and she began:

"What is the matter about that old gentleman?"

"I kept you up to tell you," he answered. "He and his brother sold their bank to a company, and retired on their property, leaving their accumulated property liable to the claims of the limited company; and his brother has died without any children; and the old man has left his eldest son in the bank; and both father and son, to keep things square, have forged names. They have forged my name among others; and I have got the forged papers in the house, and they know it. And I want to spare the old one if I can; but the young one knows I have his forgeries here, and he has set men on—for burglary, no less. If those papers were to go out of my hands and get into the bankruptcy which is coming, those two men, father and son, would go to Portland. If I were to remove the jewelry to anoth-

er banker's it would be known, and bring on the smash sooner. And so it is all here, and you know it. Thirty thousand pounds are under that bed. So keep awake, and keep your dog awake. Give me a kiss and go to bed now."

CHAPTER XVII.

A WEDDING.

As the little story runs on, we must come again to Mr. Hagbut's affair.

Was this actually Carry? Yes, it was actually Carry. Rebecca had helped to dress her, but Rebecca scarcely knew her, when she came into the room in her modest bride's dress. She was so pretty and so bright that Rebecca scarcely knew her own sister.

Rebecca was by no means acting as bridemaid: far from it. In the first place, her father had rebelled against bridemaids altogether; and in the course of a somewhat peppery conversation with Rebecca had said that she herself, considering what her relations with the bridegroom had been, had much better stay away herself. But Rebecca, getting more and more sure of her position with her father every day, had declined to stay away.

"Not see old Carry married!" she said; "I am sure I would not miss it for all the world. She has been a dear, good, loving sister to me, and has borne more petulance from me than I ever have from her."

"Then you don't feel any spite against her or him?" said Mr. Turner.

"Law, pa, what nonsense!" said Rebecca.

Although there were no real bridemaids, at the same time two young ladies were, as Hartop or Morley (or, for that matter, Hetty) would have said, "told off" to act in that capacity. They were from Miss Soper's school, and they wept as copiously as any bridemaids at St. George's, Hanover Square. Carry did not feel at all as if she wanted to cry; but she thought it was the proper thing to do, and cried hard.

The neighbors came in and chattered and giggled—Mrs. Russel and Miss Soper among them. After they had come in and saluted the bride Miss Soper drove her sharp elbow into Mrs. Russel's side, and said:

"Is he coming?"

"Who?" said Mrs. Russel.

"Morley."

"*I* don't know," said Mrs. Russel. "Don't shove like that; you've broke two of my ribs, I do believe."

"Where's she?" said Miss Soper.

"Who?" said Mrs. Russel.

"Rebecca."

"*I* don't know," said Mrs. Russel. "She will hardly have the face to show, I should think. I wish you would get out of that trick of ramming your elbow into another person's ribs when you ask a question. I'm black and blue—No. Why, that's her, ain't it, again the wall?"

It *was* her, Mrs. Russel. That grand beauty, with her chin on her hand and her elbow on her knee, who sat alone, with her great speculative eyes, seeing beyond you and the crowd behind you, was Rebecca. And as she sat there that morning, all alone, dressed in dove-colored silk and pearls, there was scarcely a handsomer woman in all old England, from palace to cottage. Your eye was not trained for beauty; you could not see it.

Miss Soper could, to a certain extent. In her business of schoolmistress she had had so much beauty put under her eye that she knew it when she saw it. Mrs. Russel's definition of beauty would have limited itself to "a fresh complexion." Miss Soper had a dim idea of generalizing from fact. Jewelers' clerks get a knowledge of what is the prevailing taste in jewelry. An old picture-dealer's clerk will tell you what will sell, and what will not. So Soper, in her trade, knew a pretty girl when she saw one, though in her office of dragon she disliked receiving them. But she knew more. She was well-connected in the trade, and she knew houses who would take an article which was seldom offered to her, and which often, in her way of doing things, gave her great trouble—a very handsome girl. So looking at Rebecca, she said:

"She is wonderfully handsome."

"Do you think so, my dear?" said Mrs. Russel. "I can't see it."

"No one ever supposed so," said Miss Soper.

"Don't shove again, dear; pray don't," said Mrs. Russel.

"What did I tell you about that girl, when we got her forbidden to go out of the lane?" said Miss Soper.

"I forget," said Mrs. Russel.

As it seemed that Miss Soper had forgotten also, she resumed the discussion at another point.

"Shall we go and speak to her?" said Miss Soper.

"My dear soul," said the really good Russel, "I think we ought. The poor child is pining over Mr. Hagbut; it would be only kind."

Was she, Mrs. Russel? No, she was away from you all, with the sounds of the great sea. While she had been sitting there in her dove-colored silk all alone she had watched your figures till she had tired of them, and had gone to sea once or twice. You were quite out of her thought. She did not want to be naughty, but she could. Why did not you leave her alone?

She could be horribly naughty, and she had the most intense dislike for these two ladies. If you had told her that Mrs. Russel was only a hot-tempered, gossiping scold, who would have given the bed from under her to release the son she had scolded out of doors, she would have laughed at you. If you had told her that that intolerable woman, Miss Soper, was in her way a heroine, and had slaved all her life to keep a ruined family together, and in doing so—in training virtuous women, had done more good than was ever likely to fall to the share of our poor Rebecca, she would have laughed at you again. Their formulas had been rendered hateful to her, and she hated them through their formulas, which had plagued her. She was a very naughty girl, and they made her naughtier.

She was rounding some dim wild cape in a gale of wind, and there were two with her whom she knew and one who always stood perversely behind her. And the one who stood behind her kept saying like a cuckoo, "Not yet. Not yet." And again like a blackbird, "Not till you're fit. Not till you're fit." And there suddenly approach to her her deadly enemies, the Russel and

the Soper. What reader would trust her temper under such circumstances?

She rose and gave them a sweeping courtesy, and, may I say it, the devil entered into her. It was only a very little one.

"Are you quite well, Miss Turner?" said the fat Russel.

"I am quite well, thank you," said Rebecca. "I had a holiday lately. It has done me much good."

"Indeed! another?" said the Soper, alluding to the terrible escapade to Ramsgate.

"Yes," said Rebecca, looking at her with a look which the Soper had never seen in any of her school-girl's faces. "Another. A young gentleman from the sea, came and took me out for a holiday, and he took me down the river all the way to Gravesend. And we were together all day."

"Who went with you, my dear?" said Mrs. Russel.

"He did," said Rebecca.

"No one else?"

"What did we want with any one else? He was very handsome and agreeable, and a third would have been one too many. I should like you to be introduced to that young gentleman, Miss Soper. His hair is so beautiful. Little curls all over his head. He sat at my feet the most of the time, and if I had had a pair of scissors, I believe I should have snipped one off."

The allied powers retreated. Says Russel, "That girl will go to the bad."

"Not she," hissed Soper in her ear. "She is just the very one of all others who won't. She is not in my line—I don't have that article in my establishment; but I know enough to know that."

Rebecca said to herself, "It is the only way to treat you people. If kings and priests would not make outrageous pretensions, democracy would die: at least pa says so. Ha! you two; Carry said you were coming."

She sat perfectly still after this, in her old attitude, quite quiet, knowing that they would come to her. The chairs beside her were unoccupied, for the Philistines did not know exactly whether they ought to go near her, and her father made no sign. "Those two" were quickly sitting beside her. She was determined to amuse herself, and in answer to their greetings she replied, without raising her chin from her hand,

"Where is Hetty?"

"She is at home," said Mr. Morley.

"What is she doing?" said Rebecca, without moving.

"She is not doing any thing to-day," said young Hartop. "She is getting the duds together. Change of ship, you know."

"Now, Jack," said Mr. Morley. "Mind your promise."

Rebecca, from young Hartop's silence, thought that Morley was angry; but moving her chin from her hand and looking up in his face she saw that his eyebrows were raised, and that the corners of his mouth were down. She also noticed that he looked more handsome than any man she had ever seen. But she had noticed that before.

The next properly arranged wedding you go to, when you have looked at the bridegroom long enough, look at the bride's father. If it is a well arranged marriage there will be the same light in the eyes of both. This was not a well arranged wedding, for our poor Rebecca, whom I hope you have forgiven, had rather spoiled it by her wild conduct. Mr. Hagbut had changed rather quickly too; and there was a cloud over it by his mere presence. Mr. Turner, man of the world, knew this, and did not show to advantage; he was haggard and worn, and bent his head.

He had been into the room and out again. She had scarcely noticed him at first, but when he came in a second time, she watched his bowed head and rose to her feet.

I know a young lady of such strange and radiant beauty, that I and my companion always know, when we go to a country gathering, in one instant, whether she is there or not. Rebecca's beauty was not so great as that lady's, I will allow; yet when she rose from between Hartop and Mr. Morley her presence was felt. The babble which was going on in awaiting the bridegroom died into whispers—into silence—as she came softly forward and kissed her father.

"Give me your blessing, father!"

Turner raised his head as she bent hers.

"The Lord of Miriam and of Jael bless thee, my daughter. Smite as Jael, then sing as Miriam. Thou art blessed, oh my daughter!"

And so he kissed her, and she went back and sat between Hartop and Mr. Morley again.

"He has forgiven her," whispered Mrs. Russel.

"Hold your tongue," said Miss Soper. "There is something *I* can't understand about this, and so I don't suppose *you* can."

"Keep close to me you two," said Rebecca, in a whisper; "I am frightened. Don't leave me you two."

"Are you ill?" said Hartop, also in a whisper.

"No, I am never ill. But these people frighten me. This house is frightful, and the lane is frightful. You don't know what this house is. There is poison in it. My father can not give me his blessing without frightening me. And Carry says that there is blood at the foot of the stairs," she added, wildly and hurriedly. "Why should he talk of Jael?"

"I wish Hetty was here," said Hartop, in a low voice.

"Quiet, my child, quiet!" said Mr. Morley, laying his hand on her arm; "talk of something else. What shall we talk of?"

"The sea," said Rebecca, herself in an instant; "I want to know about the sea, or about Hetty Morley."

"There is no such person," said Hartop, turning and looking into Rebecca's face.

"No such person!" said Rebecca, aghast. "Is she drowned?"

"Not a bit of it," said Hartop, bringing his face close to hers; "Hetty is alive, but she is Hetty Hartop now, for she and I were married by Mr. Morley yesterday morning."

Her dull horror of the old house and the quaint company was gone at once by this pretty piece of news. It was something so bright, so human, so—well, so romantic, that a great smile spread over her face, as she said,

"No."

"Fact, I assure you. Yesterday morning. You were not to be told, but I saw you were getting low." And, indeed, the tact of this young

sailor was very great, for Rebecca was quite roused again and gay.

"You provoking people. I want to see Hetty, and you will tell me nothing of her."

"It wouldn't do here," said Hartop; "they wouldn't stand it."

"But what is she like?" asked Rebecca.

"What is she like?" said the bridegroom. "Why, she is like her father; that's about what she is like. You've seen *him*," he growled.

Rebecca turned on Mr. Morley. "She is like you!"

"But younger, you know, and more good-looking," said Mr. Morley, with a bow.

And Rebecca had just settled emphatically in her mind that Hetty was very handsome, when enter the bridegroom.

"Why, that is never him," said Rebecca, suddenly.

It was, though. A man at his best—and a man generally makes the best of himself when he is going to be married—is a very different thing from a man at his worst. Rebecca and Hartop had only known him at his worst, and even Morley, knowing him better than they did, was surprised. "That big, fat, pale-faced man," he thought, "has actually more vitality than I have. I shall last longer, but if I had been what he has been, I could not have shown such a presence."

A man, we must remember, with sufficient physique for the first or second life-guards, who has spent his life in talking religionism to foolish and uneducated women, is very likely to become fat, ill-dressed, and untidy. But put that man on his mettle. Get him rejected by a beautiful girl, and make him bridegroom to another girl, and I fancy you will find some of the old Adam in him. There was a considerable deal of the old Adam in Hagbut that day; so much that he looked a rather noble person.

Rebecca leaned back in wonder, and said aloud (for she knew that no one could hear her but Mr. Morley and Hartop, and she did not "mind" them), "I could not have believed it. Why the man is handsome and noble looking."

"Is there any reason why he should *not* look noble?" said Mr. Morley, quietly. "My dear child, that man has done more good in his day than ever you will have the chance of doing, even if you had the power or the will. His formulas displease you; they are purely scriptural, and move the dead bones of the middle class into life. His vulgarity displeases you; that very vulgarity is the key-note of his power among the vulgar, who would dislike and possibly resent the ministrations of a scholar and a gentleman, who could not understand their ways of thought, and who would continually keep their inferiority before their eyes, by talking in a dialect more refined than their own. I pray God that when I die I may claim to have done as much good as Hagbut has."

"Yes!" said Rebecca, thinking.

"Yes, indeed," said Morley. "There are those who say that such men as Hagbut vulgarize religion. It is not true, or at best only half true. They find a vulgarized religion among vulgar people, and they preach it as honestly and as nobly as this man has; and he raises his people by doing so."

"How can he raise them by being vulgar?" asked Rebecca.

"He raises them, in spite of all his vulgarity, to the level of Christianity: and at that point both he and they cease to be vulgar. I dare say that the Covenanters ate with their knives, but they could die like the best gentleman of the lot. While there are vulgar people you must have vulgar priests. I, being a gentleman myself, know that well. That man Hagbut, whose ways of speech and of action are an offense to me, has brought more souls to Christ than ever I shall bring with my twopenny refinements. He comes of their own class, and their language is his. Their language is foreign to me, and I can not imitate it. And that lower middle class is the very one which wants rousing and exciting. The great use of the dissenting clergymen is to rouse that class, and to ennoble them. Hagbut can do it. I can not. I am a useless man compared to him."

"Yet you can bring sailors to chapel, Sir," said Hartop, quietly.

"Ah, yes, I can do that," said Mr. Morley, with sudden animation. "Yes, boy, I *can* do that. That was a good thing for you to say. Yes! yes! they come again and again. It is not utterly nothing to keep lads in the faith their mothers taught them through all temptations. You must come down and hear me preach some day, Miss Turner. See, the bride is moving. We must go."

So they went. And Hagbut married Carry; and the Hagbut episode in her little life came to an end.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONFIDENCES.

And Carry was gone, and Rebecca had to undertake her duties.

"I shall make a fine mess of it at first, pa," she said to her father on the first day, "for I have been most diligently idle all my life. But I will do the best I can. I can't scold and worry, but I will keep the maids in order for all that. *You* sha'n't want any thing, my dear."

"You will do well enough if you care to do it," said Mr. Turner. "*I* don't want scolding or worrying; I have lost my faith in it. That is what made the mischief between your mother and me."

"Well, dear pa, that is all over and gone. We shall be happy together, you know."

"*I* don't know. You may be happy, for you have hope before you—the hope of my death. I am a broken man. I wish I was dead."

"I am sure I don't know why, father," said Rebecca, with a heavy heart and a light tongue; "what nonsense you talk. Is there any man in our connection more honored than you are? As for the money I am to have at your death, I wish you would leave it to Carry, and then you would not suspect my love."

"You are a foolish girl."

"I think you are a very foolish man," said Rebecca, stoutly; "that prospective money has been the greatest plague of my life; I wish it was in the deep Atlantic. That— Mr. Hagbut would have left me alone if it had not been for that money."

"You were too good for him," said Turner. "Child, have you ever thought of any one else?"

"As a husband?"

"Yes; as a husband."

"Certainly," said Rebecca; "for a whole week I thought I should have liked *very much* to marry young Hartop. But, here, he has gone and married Hetty, leaving me desolate and disconsolate. There was never any one so shamefully deceived as I have been."

"Do you know Hetty Morley?" said Mr. Turner.

"No, I don't," said Rebecca; "the artful young puss! When I do I will give her a piece of my mind. Young—I mean Mr. Hartop, has used me shamefully. It is all very well for you to laugh, pa, but you wouldn't like it yourself."

"Come here," said Mr. Turner. And Rebecca came and sat at his feet.

"I have been a hard father to you, my child, and I do not know how I have won your love. But I seem to have it. God is very good. He is not what they want to make Him out, is He?"

Rebecca answered her father by stroking his hand and putting it to her lips.

"My head is growing old, girl. I am a broken man; but I will do my duty to the very last. I am not to be trusted. This responsibility about Ducetoy's papers is killing me. I never thought I should have found my truest, kindest friend in you; but it is so. You will stay by me to the end?"

"To the death, father;" she did not want him to get excited, and so she said no more.

"You are a better man than I am, child, and I wander to-night. But, believe me, that Morley's God is the true God—is the true God—and—and not Hagbut's. Where is the little dog?"

"She is here, father," said Rebecca, putting Mab on his lap.

"Pretty little beast; bonny little beast. Bark for us, little one. Defend us. My dear Rebecca, the God who made this little thing was not Hagbut's God, but Morley's."

"There is one—but one God, father," said Rebecca. And she said it because she did not know what to say.

"Yes, but they make two or three. See, girl? Will you promise me one thing?"

"I will do as you tell me," said Rebecca; "if you will be always as you are now."

"Promise me that you will never join the established church after I am dead."

Rebecca sat silent for a long time. At last she said:

"I don't think that I could promise as much as that, father. I think it extremely improbable, but I will not pledge myself. I tell you honestly that if I were to quit our connection I should go either to the Moravians or to the Primitive Methodists."

"They are not a very high sect, my child," said Mr. Turner.

"I don't *want* a very high sect," said Rebecca; "that is just where it is."

CHAPTER XIX.

DARKER HOURS STILL.

DULL was the old house, duller, alas! than ever it was, for there was not even old Carry now; and Mr. Turner, left alone in the house with the favorite daughter of his dead wife, began to mope and brood over that miserable old business. It was evident also to Rebecca that his mind was not by any means what it had been.

She was free to go where she would now, but she never went far out of the lane, except a few times as far as Putney Bridge. She used to slip across sometimes to see Mrs. Spicer or Mrs. Akin, in a quiet neighborly way, and hear their gossip, give them books, and other little things, doing them high honor. It would have been an evil time for any man who insulted her while Mr. Spicer or Akin were near.

Those two worthies were the very picture of comfort and contentment every Sunday morning, each in his shirt-sleeves and a long pipe in his mouth, as Rebecca took her father to chapel; but one morning she missed them, and thought they had gone for an expedition somewhere. "It is very little pleasure they get," she thought. "We ought not to begrudge it to them." But when they got inside the chapel who should be sitting near the door but Spicer and Akin in their best clothes! Rebecca flushed up with real pleasure, and when service was over, she made her father stop while she spoke to them.

"I am *so* glad to see you here."

"Yes, Miss," replied Akin. "It looked so nice seeing you and the gove'nor going every Sunday that we thought we'd go. That's about the size of it, Miss."

"I *hope* you like it."

"Yes, Miss, we likes it well enough," said Jim Akin, "but we don't make much fist on it at fust."

"Ah! you won't find it strange long," said Rebecca. And so they parted.

Her father asked her, as they went home under the dull gray sky, if she had asked these men to come to chapel; and she had said, "No, that she had never mentioned it to them;" and he said, "I am very glad of that. Whatever you do, don't undertake the responsibility of forcing religion on other people. Let them find it out for themselves—" He was going on to say a great deal more, as it seemed to Rebecca from the tone of his voice; but he checked himself suddenly.

It was dull, miserable, dripping, motionless weather, and she sat day after day utterly alone while her father was away on business; alone save for her little dog. She tried hard to be very good, and, as is usually the case when a person tries that, she succeeded. Only she fretted a little that she did not hear from her friends in Limehouse.

Many things in the housekeeping were great puzzles to her, and she used to take them patiently, and lay them at the feet of her beloved old nurse, Tibbey, in Leader Street, Chelsea; but it was rather a long way there, so she saw but little of those excellent souls at present.

One day there came a letter which made her cry; it was from Mr. Morley. Jack Hartop and Hetty were off to sea, and Hetty was so hard at work, shifting into her new ship, that it would be quite impossible for her, or Jack either, to get to Walham Green. He added, that as soon as they were gone, he would very likely come and see her himself. She cried a good deal over this letter, but it was not in anger and rebellion. That nightmare, Mr. Hagbut, being removed

from his position of possible husband, she rather liked him than otherwise, and was at peace with all the world; and the Limehouse people had done her much good; and she was in one way and another very far from the Rebecca of old times. She cried because she had wanted to see Hetty; and she told her father so, frankly, that night, when he asked her why her eyes were red.

"Why do you want to see her?" he asked.

"I don't know. I am sure she is nice."

"Why?"

"Because those two are so fond of her, and those two are the nicest people I know."

"Miss Hetty Morley," said Mr. Turner, "chose to disgrace herself and ruin her father's connection by a stupid and rebellious course of action. As Mrs. Hartop she is continuing it. If you walked the earth round you would not find, in the dissenting connection, three such sentimental idiots as Morley, his daughter, and Jack Hartop."

"What has Hetty done, pa?"

"Degraded herself; dropped into a low sphere of life, and dragged her fool of a father down with her. Morley may choose to tell you in his own good time—for he is as obstinate as a pig—what she *has* done; but he chooses to keep the secret, and I won't betray him."

"But you like Mr. Morley, pa?"

"Yes. He is a good and a noble man, a pure Christian, and a real gentleman; but he will have to answer to God for his indulgence to that girl."

"But you would listen to him on spiritual matters?"

"Yes, to no man sooner. But he has been a fool in a worldly point of view, by allowing that girl to do as she has done."

And this was all she could get out of her father. And the great mystery about Hetty was no nearer solution than ever.

This was probably the most weary time she had ever had; for even if Carry had been there she had lost the heart to scold her, and so her sole amusement was gone. She had her cats, and was still kind to them, though her little dog Mab had supplanted them in her affections. She told Mab every thing now; and Mab seemed to understand. She could have told her father every thing, but there was a reason.

At one time, not long ago, she had believed that there would have been perfect accord between herself and her father. It was not to be. The overwhelming sense of responsibility with regard to Lord Ducetoy's papers were too much for his mind, and it became clouded; and in its clouding there came on a phase of religious doubt, which may be laughed at by doctrinaires, but which in practice, in reality, was, to Rebecca at least, horrible.

If he would have broken out into unbelief and sheer blasphemy at once, she could have stood it better. But he got dreadful silent fits, ending in sharp-pointed deductions, the result of an hour's solitary, silent argument with himself. He would sit perfectly silent, with his hands occasionally wandering one over the other for an hour, until he nearly drove the silently sewing Rebecca opposite him out of her mind; and, at last, when the poor, unguided girl, working so hard and so nobly at her duty, was nearly out of her mind through sheer nervousness, he would say, suddenly and sharply:

"If one actually regains consciousness after the dissolution of the body, and if one finds that the whole scheme has been a mistake from beginning to end. How then? One will regret that one had not been a profligate; a man who takes such pleasure as he can find, and discounts his bills on the future state."

And so on. Which has nothing to do with us further than this. It was horrible and intolerable to Rebecca. It frightened her. She had rebelled against a certain close form of nonconformist Christianity, as being narrow, cold, and in her eyes worthless, because it wanted the one element of sentimentalism. There had come to her the stout nonconformist Morley, who had shown her a form of dissent as beautiful and as spiritual as the highest forms of Anglicanism or Romanism, though wanting in the ceremonialisms which, as the daughter of a Papist mother, she loved in her heart. And now here was her father cutting the ground from under her feet, just as she was feeling for it. De profundis clamavit; that is to say, she turned on her father once and said, most emphatically,

"I am sorry you have lost your faith, pa; but I can't see that there is the slightest reason for your undermining mine; I am beginning to believe. Please let me."

Turner saw what she meant, and uttered no more of his doubts. But he sat there, opposite Rebecca, night after night, scowling over his Bible as he turned the leaves, and looking unutterable things. Which did not mend matters much for poor Rebecca—which in fact made them rather worse, for she could never tell what he was thinking of now.

In the foolish old days, before one thought, many of us used to read the accounts of the prize-fights in *Bell's Life;* and one used to read that Bob So-and-so "was a glutton for punishment." Now I claim for Rebecca that she was a better "glutton for punishment" than any snake-headed, bright-eyed young man who ever made a brute of himself in the prize ring.

Punishment enough she got in these days. Her father fading and growing mad before her eyes. No society; and as it seemed to her no hope. The responsibility of the enormous amount of valuable heir-looms and papers in the house, thrown on her own shoulders, for her father was as no one save in his determination to hold by them. No help, no advice, nothing for her but a dull, mulish obstinacy; a determination to act honestly as circumstances should direct. And all the time her father in one of his "girding" moods; accusing her of idleness, and making his case good to her about her dead mother. Punishment enough, poor child! But she took it bravely and nobly.

"Pa," she said, one night, "don't gird at me!"

His face had been fixed before, but it relaxed now.

"Have I been girding at you, Rebecca?"

"Yes, pa. Don't, please."

"I won't, dear. I didn't mean to. Tell me when I gird at you, and I will leave off."

CHAPTER XX.

OTHELLO, MOOR OF VENICE.

At last Mr. Morley came. Surely no brown, handsome face, no quiet hazel eyes, no very slightly grizzled head of curling hair was ever more welcome in a Christian house than were his.

It was in the dreary middle of the day when he came, and Rebecca, who was kneading dough (and making an awful mess of it) uttered a joyful exclamation when she saw him. I think that I have mentioned before that in social matters this odd young lady was rather radical. She certainly behaved on this occasion in a way which would have horrified the better conducted sister Carry. She ran up the stairs and opened the door herself with her hands, nay, with her finely-moulded bare arms all over flour, and she said: "Come in; I thought you must be dead. Tell me about those two."

"Go and wash your hands, and come and talk to me in the parlor," said Mr. Morley, quietly, and Rebecca slid away and did as he told her.

"Now," she said, when she was seated by him on the sofa, "tell me all about Jack and Hetty."

"That will depend on your account of your behavior," said Mr. Morley. "How have you been behaving?"

"I have been as good as gold."

"Then I shall not tell you one word," said Mr. Morley; "you are in a vainglorious and self-seeking frame of mind, and I will mortify you by not telling you one single word."

"Well, then, I have been very naughty."

"One of your propositions must be false, and so I shall certainly tell you nothing now."

"Then you are a most disagreeable man, and I hate you—no I don't—don't mind me. I love you very much, Mr. Morley. Only come sometimes and tell me what to do, for really and truly I don't know."

"You have been well brought up, and you ought to know for yourself. At least I mean to leave you to find out. How is your father?"

Rebecca remained perfectly silent, with her chin in her hand for a long time, and Morley sat looking at her steadily, although she did not know it. She sat so long thus that he repeated his question, I very much fear to catch the light in her eye. Rebecca turned to him quickly for one instant, and he had his will. She gave him one kindly glance, and saying, "Wait a little," resumed her old attitude of thought—that of Michael Angelo's Lorenzo de Medici.

Morley waited for her in silence and in patience. "Here," he said to himself, "is a woman who will actually think before she speaks. Here is also a woman who can act, who has acted, on far-seeing, deliberate conviction, careless of present consequences. Are there two Hettys in the world?" He sat and watched her, wondering what would come.

He had a long time to wait before it came, for she did not open her mouth until she had made up her mind. And then she told him every thing, decisively, and straightforwardly, as one man tells a whole matter to another man who is his friend.

She moved closer to him on the sofa where they sat, so that the two beautiful faces were not very far apart, and so that her eyes could look straight up into his. And there and then she told him every thing.

Her wasted, rebellious, furious youth; her secret hankering after popery—the religion of her mother, he must mind—as promising some sort of rest to her furious heart; the quieting effect that the gentle Primitive Methodists had had on her always; her rage and hatred against Hagbut because he wanted to marry her; the real reason of her wild escapade to Ramsgate; her love for her father; her love for Carry; her love for her little dog; her love for Mr. Spicer and Jim Akin; her love for Jack Hartop; for Hetty, whom she had never seen, and her love for him—Morley. "I assure you, Mr. Morley, that I believe I am a most affectionate person, if I had a fair chance. But people are so cross. I'd get fond of old Russel and old Soper if they would only be civil."

Mr. Morley said, "Quite so."

Then she went on, resuming the Lorenzo de Medici attitude again, and leaving herself and her experience, told him in a plain, business-like manner, the whole story of her father, and her troubles from beginning to end. "For," she said, "you have got kind, trust-worthy eyes, like Mab's, and if one wants to keep out of Bedlam, one must tell some one. And so she told him all about the fearful responsibility her father had undertaken, pointed out to him that her father's action was nearly illegal, being done without the consent of trustees, of whom Sir Gorham Philpott was one.

Here Mr. Morley interrupted her for a moment. "Was Lord Ducetoy married?"

"No; and he would not get married for a month or so, until affairs were in some way square. He was to be married to Miss Egerton of Delamere."

Mr. Morley was satisfied at once, and begged her to proceed.

She went on at once, eagerly, not catching the drift of Morley's last inquiry; for he was so surprised at Turner's singular and chivalrous behavior that it had entered into his, not generally a suspicious mind, that Turner wished Lord Ducetoy to marry Rebecca. Rebecca, I say, went on, and told him of the clouding of her father's mind; of his religious doubts; of his strange midnight wanderings up and down the old house; of the awful responsibility which weighed on her with regard to him. She told him all; and then, turning her face to his again, asked for his advice.

"It is easily given, Rebecca," he said; "go on as you are going now. Do your duty to him as you are doing it now, and you will not fail. You have a clear sharp brain, *use it;* and you will do well."

"But I have *done* nothing," said Rebecca.

"What could you do?" said Morley.

Rebecca's chin went in her hand again directly; and after a time she said:

"I don't see, speaking honestly, that I could have done any more than I have. The time for action has not come. And then I am such a fool, you know."

"Are you?"

"They all say so."

"Well, then, of course it is true. About this business, taken as a whole, you can do nothing

more than you have done. It is one of those matters on which one can not decide. Your father is behaving splendidly; but if his religion goes from him in the struggle, your father will die. I will talk to him. You are a good girl; indeed, I always thought you were, do you know;" and Morley laughed.

"That is all very fine," said Rebecca; "but at the same time one would like a little practical advice."

"I'll manage matters for you, my child," said Morley. "I'll shift no responsibility off your shoulders on to mine, but I will make things easier for you. You do your little duty, and you will come to no harm."

"Then you don't think me such a very naughty girl?"

"Well, well! you are behaving well now."

"Am I naughtier than Hetty?"

"You leave Hetty alone; Hetty is no business of yours."

"But Hetty was naughty. What did she do, Mr. Morley?"

"She was exceedingly naughty, and I was very nearly being angry with her; that is what she did."

"Am I never to see Hetty?"

"What on earth do you want to see her for?"

"I don't know," said Rebecca. "I think I should like her. There can not be much harm about her, or Jack Hartop would not love her as he does. He says that she has been wrecked three times, and that the Queen wrote her a letter. Why was she shipwrecked?"

"Because she shipped on board ships which happened to be wrecked."

"Hum!" said Rebecca. "But why did the Queen write to her?"

"Because she did her duty, as you are doing yours now."

"But tell me more," said Rebecca, eagerly. "Let me know *something* of her; for I love her, and I can't tell why. What did she do that the Queen should have written to her. Tell me."

Dangerous work this. Two noble and enthusiastic souls, sitting close to one another, and telling of great and noble deeds. As for Morley, *he* had made up his mind long before. He was determined to marry Rebecca, and Hartop and Hetty knew it. As for Rebecca, she brought her fate on herself. If she had desired her freedom she should not have sat on the sofa beside a very attractive dissenting minister, and have forced him to tell the tale of his daughter's heroism. All that happened to her was her own fault. But they will do it. Searching among rare old books the other day, I came across a very scarce play called *Othello, or the Moor of Venice.* In that play the Moor actually wins his Venetian beauty by telling travelers' taradiddles of the Sir John Mandeville type. Morley did not do this; he only told the plain truth about his daughter. But the telling of chivalrous adventures is a very successful way of courting. At least, the man Shakspeare thought so.

"I have no objection to tell you what Hetty did on that occasion," said Mr. Morley. "It may show you what a woman may be worth under certain circumstances. She had been up and down the North Devon coast so often that she could tell every headland in the darkest night. Well, one night, working up from Hayle against a slow eastering wind and a heavy ebb tide, the wind shifted against the sun, and came from nor'-west a hurricane. The skipper put her head for Cardiff, but that *Bride* is the most thundering—I beg a thousand pardons; you must remember that I live among sailors."

"You did not say any thing?" said Rebecca.

"Well, I was very near doing it," said Morley. "My dear, that *Bride* is the most thundering idiot of a ship you ever saw. With even the N.W. sea she shipped enough water on board to put out her fires, and there she lay entirely without deck ports to let the water away, trusting to her scuppers, which were choked with deck lumber, close to a lee-shore, with the seas getting up from the Atlantic, nothing between you and Charleston, South Carolina, and the skipper utterly uncertain as to where he was. Do you understand this, my dear Rebecca?"

"Not a bit," she said. "You and Hetty must teach me."

"We will," said Morley. "My dear Hetty, finding her cabins flooded and the ship nearly water-logged, with fires out, and stokers and firemen on deck, naturally came on deck herself, bareheaded, with all her glorious beauty, wild in the storm; you know Hetty's beauty—no, by-the-by, you don't—but it is greater than your own, child. And in the terror of the tempest she asked the skipper where they were.

"And the skipper said, 'I think we have sea-room, Miss Morley; we are off the Bideford River, and we may get anchorage and ride it out. Can you see to leeward? Is it not so?'

"But Hetty never answered one word. She peered to leeward through the fury of the tempest, and she came back to him with the message of death quite quietly.

"'My dear Captain Jeffries, you are not off the Bideford River at all. Look there over the starboard bow. That black wall is Baggy Point. Think; can it be any thing else?'

"And the skipper put his hat on the deck and trampled on it.

"But Hetty said, 'I will go and get my women ready for death, for with this set of the tide we shall be on Morte Stone in ten minutes. Alas! I wish this was untrue.' And the skipper said, 'Is there nothing to be done?' And Hetty said, 'Yes. Make sail on her and put her ashore at Wollacombe.' 'With rising tide?' said the skipper. 'It is better than Morte Stone,' said Hetty.

"And he did it, my dear Rebecca. He made sail on her and put her helm up. And she burst heavily on shore, with the rising tide behind her, and the rapidly accumulating sea following her, and getting more furious each moment.

"It was a dim, dark winter's night, my dear, and there was no help to be had. One by one the sailors leaped into the long surf, and some were drowned and some escaped. Hetty got her women into the forecastle, for the ship had gone stem on, and at last no one was left but the women and the skipper.

"The skipper was doubtful about the ship lasting out the tide; but Hetty pointed out to him that she, although a *beast*, was strongly built. To the women under her care she pointed out the fact that in three hours they would walk on shore. And as she was telling them this the ship, by the rising of the tide, shifted

broadside on, with a sickening, thumping lurch, and the sea, which hitherto had only been beating over the poop, burst in its rising anger over the whole ship.

"And all the women, young and old, huddled round my beautiful daughter, crying to her to save them. And she, believing that the end had actually come, quieted them by prayer."

A pause.

"You say they were saved. Oh yes! they were saved. The captain and the women walked ashore the next morning and went to Ilfracombe. But the Queen wrote to Hetty, and that is what she wrote about."

Dangerous talk this, or the rare play of *Othello* errs.

Mr. Morley came very often indeed now, and his gentle, kindly ministrations had some good effect on Mr. Turner. Morley took the line with him that he had devoted his life to what he thought the right, and that if he had erred it was only in searching after a nearly impossible excellence. This was in the main true, and it comforted Turner exceedingly. The effect on Turner was not so satisfactory as Mr. Morley could have desired. He suddenly developed a vainglorious, boastful mood, and would talk by the hour, to Rebecca in particular, on his virtuous and blameless life; would compare his life to the lives of all the other men he knew, very much to his own advantage. In fact, the poor man's brain was upset by anxiety, and he had got into that frame of thought which consists in persistently stating one's case against destiny, proceeds into an active contemplation of self, and ends in Bedlam. Morley saw this after a time, and counteracted it as well as he was able. On the whole, however, he did Turner much good, and made life easier for Rebecca.

CHAPTER XXI.

A SUDDEN SURPRISE.

One Saturday night her father was in a very silent, thoughtful mood, and would not speak at all, but sat brooding, and now and then would kneel down and pray—to poor Rebecca's great discomfiture. How many bitter tears she shed that night who can tell? She saw that he was not angry with her; for even when he sat by the half-hour together, looking steadily at her, his look was not unkind. This little fact saved her from hysterics; for, to an exceedingly sensitive nature like hers, the fact of having a stern old man sitting perfectly silent before her, hour after hour, and staring at her with intervals of prayer, was nearly too much. She was relieved when he took his candle and prepared to go to bed.

"Rebecca," he said, "I desire that you will be ready for Mr. Morley to-morrow morning by the first boat."

"What does he want with me?"

"I do not know; but you will have the goodness to go with him. Good-night." And he went.

It would be very difficult to say what Rebecca's thoughts were that night. They were, one would fancy, not very profound. She had tact enough to see that Mr. Morley would, most probably, ask her no question requiring any immediate answer; yet he might. Long before morning dawned she had thought it all through, and had come to the resolution that if on this occasion, or on any other, Mr. Morley chose to put a certain question to her, that he would have a most decided and emphatic answer; an answer which would prevent his ever repeating his question. "For we do love him, Mab, don't we?" she said to her little dog. "The only question is, what does he think of us?"

She had breakfast ready for him, and was nicely dressed when he came. "Well, Mr. Morley," she said, "and so I am to have a Sunday out with you? If you are pleased, I am sure I am. This is very kind and considerate of you, indeed. Where are we going?"

"I was going to ask you to come down to Limehouse with me."

"I am dressed, ready to go where you will. Now we will start, or you will be late for your service."

Morley rose and leaned against the chimney-piece, and Rebecca stood before him. The man had resolved the night before to examine her character more closely, in times of trial, for another six months. He had resolved that he would see her under every form of temptation before he committed himself irrevocably; he had determined that he would see how far he could mould her character—had made a hundred priggish resolutions. But as she stood before him at that moment she looked so grand, so noble, and withal so good, that his resolutions all went to the wind; and, like a true man as he was, he spoke his mind.

"Rebecca, child, I love you more than all the world besides."

She only flushed up and stood quite still. She was as utterly unprepared for this as he was himself. She hardly thought it would come at all; still less on this day; still less at the beginning. But these accidents happen, and Rebecca, although prepared with her answer, could not give it from sheer surprise.

"Are you angry with me? Is there another?" he said. And she quickly found her tongue—"Oh no, no! no other. Please try to love me, Mr. Morley, and I will do my very best."

And so they kissed one another and jogged out to the steamboat arm in arm, with no further words which would assist the telling of this story; and it was all over and done, for ever and ever, a great deal sooner than either of them dreamed of. And men of the world have informed me that this is frequently the case. "If a man and a woman," said one of them, sententiously, "have made up their minds to make fools of themselves, they no more know at what particular time they will do it any more than you or I do. They, however, always do it before they mean to."

They jogged out arm in arm down the lane in the most sedate manner conceivable. But you can not keep that sort of thing quiet; it will show itself. Mr. Spicer and Mr. Akin were taking the refreshment of shag tobacco, out of the style of pipe which they called "long churchwardens," when Mr. Morley and Rebecca passed. *They* saw what had happened directly. Mr. Akin said:

"She's took him."

Mr. Spicer said, "He has got her, hard and fast."

"He is a Methody, ain't he?" said Mr. Akin.

"Oh!" said Mr. Spicer, "but he is a sailor Methody. Why, that man," he went on, pointing after the disappearing Mr. Morley with his pipe-stem, "has been a-bursted up, with shipwrecks, and earthquakes, and gales of wind, more than any skipper as sails upon the sea. He has got a good 'un, and she has got a good 'un. There is her little dog a-coming out, Jim, a-trying to foller; send her back. Hish back, little dog. Hish back, little pretty pet."

But Jim Akin, having secured Mab, with that intense love of a highly-bred dog which seems almost ingrained in the Londoner's nature, possessed himself of Mab's person, and made her take breakfast on a chair among his children. Mab, as great a radical as her mistress, enjoyed this extremely, and was, in fact, not taken back till just before chapel-time; by which time our two friends were landing far down the river.

The steamer was nearly empty, for it was very early, and they sat alone and talked.

"When did you think of this first, my beloved?" said Morley.

"Only very lately. I am utterly taken by surprise."

"And I also. I never dreamed of speaking so soon. My own, I have no home to offer you. I am bound for the sea."

"And I must stay by father," she said. "So that happens well."

"Then will you wait, Rebecca?"

"Wait for what?"

"To be married."

"Of course I will wait, any time. I have got your heart; I care for nothing more."

"Now I am going to say something which will offend you," said Mr. Morley.

"I think not," said Rebecca; "but say it."

"All this has been talked over, time after time, between Hetty, Jack Hartop, and I."

"No, really! Well, I am very glad of that. Does Hetty think she will like me, dear?"

"You shall find out that for yourself."

"I am content. Alfred, this is the first day I have ever felt peace in my whole life. When may I know Hetty?"

"When she comes back from America, perhaps."

"Only perhaps. Are you going to America, Alfred?"

"I am going farther than what one generally calls America. I have failed here to a certain extent. I am only popular among sailors, and sailors come and go; and the regular connection at Limehouse dislike me for preaching pure moralisms, and for consorting with the men of the Establishment. They are right. But I am a scholar and a gentleman, and it is a sore temptation for me to mix with the men of the Establishment, who are, some of them, scholars and gentlemen. And as for preaching moralisms, what can one preach else, when the heart is sick? And, again, Hetty, my darling Hetty, is a standing scandal to a certain set, the rich set, down there; and so I am going abroad; and I have no home to give you."

"But," said Rebecca, "if you have power among the sailors they should keep you."

"Well, you see your brother-in-law, Hagbut, has gone so terribly against Hetty. And he is all-powerful there."

"I will ask no more about Hetty," said Rebecca, laughing, "because I sha'n't be told. But all dissenters are not so narrow as these?"

"Bless you, no. It is only our little connection, fighting for sheer existence, which is so narrow. Any one of the larger sects would welcome me—ay, and Hetty with me."

"And you could not join them?"

"No," said Morley. "Theoretically, our people are the only pure Christians. Practically, from ignorance, vanity, and stupidity, we are the weakest of all sects. But I am no turn-coat."

"Where thou goest I will go. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God," murmured Rebecca. And so they went on their Sabbath-day's journey,

> Until the forward creeping tides
> Began to foam and they to draw,
> From deep to deep to where they saw
> The great ships lift their shining sides.

And Mr. Morley said, "This is Limehouse. Do you think you shall like it?"

"I'll see," said Rebecca, as they went on shore.

He was very anxious to know, for he had his plans; but he did not press her, but waited anxiously, for Limehouse is not at all an attractive place. Rebecca's first impressions of it were, that it was very dirty; that it smelt of tar and coals; that the ladies of Limehouse did not do their hair at their first toilet, or levee, and that they stood in the middle of the street, with their arms crossed, and stopped talking to stare at her. That there were too many bare-armed ladies leaning out of upper windows, who talked to one another across the street, and had the same disconcerting habit of being perfectly and suddenly dumb, as she and Mr. Morley went by. Likewise the gentlemen, although evidently sailors, were by no means sailors of the Hartop type, being far less deferential and far more ostentatious in the admiration of her beauty than was at all desirable; and, moreover, she could not disguise from herself that but a few of these gentlemen were exactly sober, though only one was drunk—a Norwegian skipper, a short, stout man, with a great blonde curling beard down over his broad chest, who had been making a night of it, and was bent on making a day of it, but who was being taken to his ship by a select committee or caucus of experienced topers, and whose reiterated argument was that his ship lay off the back-door of every public house which he passed. This was strange, and not very agreeable, to Rebecca, and she still withheld her opinion.

But, when they went further, she began to alter her opinion, and, in fact, changed it altogether.

On the edge of the brimming river they came on a quiet, peaceful row of houses. These houses partly faced the river one way, and on the other a dock, in which ships, small ones it is true, but still real ships which had fought the great ocean, with their yard-arms against the windows of the houses.

They came along this dock in approaching the river, and Rebecca looked down on the decks of the ships, and began wondering how those dull inert masses must look at the mercy of all the fury of wind and sea combined against them. There was no sign of the great sea struggle on them now; only a waste of coiled ropes on deck, and cobweb-like rigging aloft. On one of them

was a boy, a coaly boy, in a blue jersey. He, in the surrounding silence and peace, was remarkable. On board another was another boy (washed, this one), who played with the skipper's dog: this boy was an event; on another was the skipper's boy climbing up a high ladder to shore with the Sunday's dinner of neck-of-mutton, with potatoes under it, and a solitary onion atop, balanced on his head, going to the baker's, while, from below, the skipper's wife, baby on arm, watched him breathlessly.

"I shall like this place very much indeed," she said, emphatically and suddenly.

"That is well," said Morley.

"Do you *know* these people?" asked Rebecca.

Morley stood still until the boy with the potatoes and mutton had effected his dangerous landing on that iron-bound coast, and continued to look down on to the deck of the ship. After a time the skipper's wife's eye, being diverted from the very dangerous landing of that bold young mariner, the apprentice, rested on Mr. Morley. Whereupon she danced the baby, and "hailed" Mr. Morley in that peculiar yell with which the wives of coasting skippers hail the wives of other coasting skippers, their gossips, on the high sea. C in alto staccato, I suppose, not being musical myself, notes inaudible to the male ear on the waste of waters, but perfectly audible in dock to a priest as well used to sailors' wives as Mr. Morley. While Rebecca was reading on the stern of the vessel, *Jane*, Ilfracombe, she heard the following dialogue:

"My dear, tender heart, how be ye?"

"All well here, Mrs. Camp?"

"He has a-gone to chapel, my dear," said Mrs. Camp, "and he is agoing to stay. So nice and kind he is. And I'm coming if the boy is back in time; but I can't leave the ship."

"Listen to me," said Morley, in a strangely emphatic voice. "Have you any fire on board?"

"No," said Mrs. Camp, coming close under him, and speaking eagerly.

"Then, if the boy don't come back, leave the ship and come and communicate. Remember, it may be the last chance either of you will have to communicate together forever. Come and kneel with him. There will be an empty place in his heart some day, maybe, if you do not."

The woman said "Wait," and went into the cabin, and in a moment had reappeared with a bonnet on, not clean, and a gray shawl over her shoulders (for these people were not rich), and her baby on her arm. "Now," she said, "minister, I am ready. God bless you for pointing it out."

And they three walked away together. And Rebecca took all these things and hid them in her heart.

Now baby had not occurred as a difficulty to Rebecca, but Mrs. Camp had provided for baby, and was going to leave him on the way with one Mrs. Tryon, widow of a deceased warrant officer, R.N., who lived on his pension, and on the letting of lodgings to dissenting skippers. She was the most terrible tartar in that peaceful waterside community, and the most difficult to manage. "No one," said the dwellers in Ropewalk Terrace, "could get to the windward of Mrs. Tryon, save Mr. Morley, and a sailor's wife in distress."

Now it so happened, in the everlasting fitness of things, that Captain Moriarty, of Waterford, a Papist, had run his schooner, the *Ninety-eight*, in on the tide opposite her house, and had then incontinently gone ashore and amused himself. And that schooner, finding herself deserted by the tide, with no hawsers laid out to larboard, had, in an idiotic and beery way, heeled over and poked her foretopsail-yard through Mrs. Tryon's best parlor-window, to the destruction of property. If it had been a Protestant ship she would not have cared; but a Papist ship—the *Ninety-eight* (she was old enough to remember Hoche), was too much. The damage to property was small; but if a stanch dissenting Protestant woman's windows were to be broken by the yard-arm of a Papist ship, why then—So she had laid in wait for Captain Moriarty.

Captain Moriarty had kept away like a good sailor and a dextrous Irishman, till he supposed she had started for chapel. But it was no good. As Mr. Morley and Rebecca came up they were hard at it. Both Mr. Moriarty and Mrs. Tryon were sincerely religious in their very various ways; and Mrs. Tryon, knowing this well, exercised him principally on religious grounds, until he was half crazy with anger.

"That is what the old fool at Rome tells you to do, is it? To break into widows' houses with your foretopsail-yard, and for a pretense make long prayers. Oh, yours is a precious religion, yours is!"

"You insult my religion, Mrs. Tryon," said the Irishman; "I never insulted yours. It was an accident, and I am very sorry."

"*Accident!*" said Mrs. Tryon. "Why, if my poor man that is gone had come home the worse for drink, and had moored his ship as you have moored yours, me and my gal would have gone out in the dead of the darkest night, and have taken the hawsers to larboard ourselves. Bah!"

By this moment our party had arrived, and had heard what had been said. There was no need for any interference on the part of Mr. Morley, for Mrs. Camp stepped up to Mrs. Tryon with baby, and said:

"My dear, mind baby for me. I want to go to chapel with Mr. Morley, and take Sacrament with my old man. For we are going to the old Cameroons, on the West Coast, and we shall never come back no more, I doubt."

Hard-featured Mrs. Tryon flushed up. "Here, Keziah," she said to her maid, "take this baby; I am going to chapel. Moriarty, don't mind my tongue, for you are a good man; mind your larboard hawsers."

And so they all went together. And Rebecca said, as they went, "I think I shall like this place very much indeed."

When they came out from chapel there was a brimming flood-tide under a bright sun, with the ships passing upward under a good brisk wind from the free happy sea beyond.

"How far is it to the sea, Alfred?" asked Rebecca, in a whisper, for the congregation was still round them.

"Fifty miles."

"We shall sail on it together one day, sha'n't we, with Hetty and Hartop?"

"I hope so," said Mr. Morley, quietly; "but

much must happen first. I must provide a home."

"Yes. I do not mean that," said Rebecca; "I was only thinking of your sermon. Why did you take such a text on such a happy day as this, and preach only of the cruelty of the sea? Such a wild, strange text—'The burden of the desert of the sea.'"

"I only wished to check your fanciful love for it, Rebecca. A day will come when you will not love it as well as you do now."

And Rebecca said only, "Well, the present is with us, and I am very happy."

"I want to ask you, Rebecca, if you have any objection to my telling what has happened between us two to a few intimate friends?"

"I have none at all, Alfred, if you think it right. I am very proud of it, I assure you."

I, for my part, don't think that there was much necessity for any announcement at all. The whole congregation might run and read, and in fact did so. When they saw their very handsome and eminently marriageable minister with a beautiful young lady on his arm, to whom he talked in whispers, they formed their own conclusions, and generally "overhauled" her (we are in a nautical neighborhood), at their one o'clock dinner, some saying she was too fine for him, but the most of them thinking that she would do, but that her beauty put them too strongly in mind of that poor Mrs. Hartop; they hoped that he might have better luck with his wife than he had had with his daughter, but generally acquiesced in what did not in the least concern them, and wished their good minister well. Two young ladies seceded for a week or so, and met one another at various chapels in the neighborhood for a few Sundays; but even they got over it in time. The "minister's wooing" was a patent thing to all.

But here were the minister and his sweetheart (we have no better word than that dear old English one, except that abominable French one, *fiancée!*) on the breezy quay, with all the congregation gone except a very few, dreaming and whispering. They were aroused by the emphatic voice of Mrs. Tryon, a woman given to management from her youth upward, who said:

"Where do you take your dinner to-day, minister?"

"Dear me!" said Mr. Morley, with a start, "I had not thought about that."

"No one ever believed that you had," said Mrs. Tryon. "But here are Captain and Mrs. Camp, making an extraordinary proposal."

And, indeed, there was no one on the wharf but Mrs. Tryon and Mr. and Mrs. Camp, when Mr. Morley turned round to speak to them.

"My dear friends," he said, "I want to tell you something. This young lady has promised to be my wife."

"So I should have supposed," said Mrs. Tryon the irrepressible. "And a lucky woman, too, if she only knows it. Well, my dear, I wish you all joy and happiness. There's no such good husbands in the world as sailors, my dear. And *he* is a sailor, true blue every inch of him! But what do you say to this ridiculous proposal of Captain and Mrs. Camp?"

Captain Camp stood meekly behind his wife and pushed her forward, prompting her in whispers from behind his hand; and Mrs. Camp did the talking.

"Mr. Morley, me and my old man thought that you being a real sailor, and having made no arrangements for dinner, and Mrs. Tryon's windows being broke in—"

"By the yard-arm of a Papist foretop-sail schooner," interposed Mrs. Tryon, with emphasis.

"Quite so, thank you," said Mrs. Camp, turning to Mrs. Tryon gratefully, as if from the stores of Mrs. Tryon's wisdom she had been assisted with an additional argument which had previously escaped her. "Mrs. Tryon's house being broke into by Captain Moriarty, a dear loved friend, I am sure, but incautious; we thought that perhaps—seeing that we're for the Cameroons, and might never come back—that you would have your dinner aboard. But the young lady. Miss, I humbly wish you every joy; but I doubt it wouldn't do for you, Miss."

"Please let me go, Alfred. Do let me go," said Rebecca, eagerly. Whereupon Captain Camp came forward, and Rebecca looked at him.

A splendid young sailor, truly, but not of the Hartop type. Very blonde, with a golden beard, cool, deliberate, but wanting vitality; a man who is apt to knock under on a bad coast, an anxious man, who kills himself by worrying about his responsibilities, when coarser natures, often culpably careless, lose their ships and make such a good sailor-like show before the Board that they keep their certificates, while men like Captain Camp have theirs suspended. This young man said to them very quietly:

"If it was possible, Mr. Morley, that you could dine with us it would give us great pleasure. If this lady is to be a true wife to you, and if you are the same man as ever, she will fare rougher than she will to-day. Our last voyage was to Levant, Miss; and we can give you pretty and delicate things to eat, which you could scarcely buy in shops."

"Please let me go, Alfred!"

"My dear, I am not preventing you. I should like you to go. Only I thought—"

"Never mind what you thought. I am very hungry, and Mrs. Camp's mutton must be on its way home, so we had better get on board ship as soon as possible."

"You will do, my dear," said Mrs. Tryon. "Camp, you had better start your boy up to my place for some knives and forks and things. You shall have my place with your back against the mizzen-mast."

"Are you coming?" said Rebecca, as they walked. "I am glad of that."

"Are you, my dear? well, that is good hearing, for it is few like me. As for coming, I make it a rule never to dine ashore on Sundays— Rabbit the man, he will never be quiet in his grave till he has had my house down!"

This last exclamation was tortured out of her as they rounded the corner and had come in sight of her own house, and the reason of it was this: the schooner *Ninety-eight* had righted with the rising tide, and, in so righting herself, pulled away the whole of Mrs. Tryon's veranda. It was really a serious disaster in a small way, and Mrs. Camp dreaded a terrible storm. She took Mrs. Tryon the terrible by the arm, and said:

"Don't be angry with him, dear; he is only an Irishman. Think where we have been together to-day, and don't be angry with him, he is such a good fellow."

"*I* won't be angry with him, my dear," said Mrs. Tryon. "But I will have it out of his owners if there is a law in the land."

"And then the Board will stop his certificate," said Mrs. Camp. "Don't'ee say any thing, don't'ee. He was so kind to us, when my man got his ship ashore at Fayal. Don't'ee say any thing. Minister, ask her not to quarrel with him."

"I will take no steps at all," said Mrs. Tryon, "further than asking him to moor his ship opposite some other widow's house. But how has he managed to do it? My old man used to say, when talking of gunnery, that the angle of incidence was equal to the angle of reflection. So I should have supposed that when he had once poked his yard-arm through my window, he could have taken it out again, without pulling half the wall down. I see, this is your Irish seamanship."

Captain Moriarty was straight in their way, and it was unavoidable that there should be an interchange of broadsides. They were all a little nervous, as the frigate Tryon ranged alongside the frigate Moriarty. Moriarty prepared to fire.

Mrs. Tryon delivered her broadside and passed on, leaving Moriarty in a state of collapse.

"Seas and tidal waters," she said, "are free to all nations, in times of peace. At the same time, Captain Moriarty, the next time it pleases you to knock a Protestant widow's house about her ears, I would trouble you to remember, that it is better seamanship, according to English Protestant lights, to let a ship right as she went over, and not to alter her angle by useless hawsers. Likewise, if you had let go your larboard tacks and sheets, your yard-arm would have come out of my parlor without carrying away the veranda. Whereas, there they are all taut now to shame you, as taut as any standing rigging. Have you *navigated* Mrs. Camp's baby to death, or has it escaped?"

No, Mrs. Camp's baby was waiting for them opposite Captain Camp's ship. Keziah had made it ill with Ipecacuanha lozenges, but babies generally are ill, as far as I have ever observed, and so it did not much matter. Not only the baby was here, but the boy, arriving from the baker's, with the mutton on his head, and going across the ladder (for it was now high tide) before them, without apology, feeling himself master of the situation. In less than three minutes Rebecca found herself, with her back to the mizzen-mast, in a rather small cabin, eating baked mutton and potatoes—and liking it too.

"I hope you like your dinner, Miss Turner?" said Mrs. Camp, anxiously.

"I like it very much," said Rebecca. "And I like the place I eat it in, and I like the people I eat it with."

"So *you* can make *your* mind easy, Mrs. Camp," struck in Mrs. Tryon. And to Rebecca, "I knew you were one of us, my dear, the first moment I set eyes on you."

"I'll do my best," said Rebecca. "If people will be kind to me, I will do any thing. But I am foolish. If any one is unkind to me, I will sit moping and dull, without any power of action, for days and days."

"That's bad," said Mrs. Tryon; "but it is better than flying out and saying things you never meant, and which you can't recall. If a man don't love a woman, her hard words are nothing. If he does, her words mean more than she thought, and he wants time to forget them, and don't always do that. And a man's hard words to a woman are worse, because a woman can't ship for a voyage as a man can, and come home like a bridegroom. As for me, I only speak of what I have seen in others, for I have had no experience myself."

"You were married a long time, Mrs. Tryon?" said Rebecca.

"Yes, but me and my old man never had words. We both had tempers, and so, knowing that, we kept them. And he was a good husband to me; and the parting was bitter. With the Sacrament in my mouth, I should not bear ill-will; but it was that African squadron killed him, and so I bear ill-will to the Cameroons. It didn't much matter. Our minister has assurance that we shall meet again. And then all doubts will be cleared up, and old love revived (as if it wanted reviving), and we shall go on hand in hand through eternity. Therefore, Miss Turner, what does such a trifling parting as ours matter?"

"Then we shall meet our loved ones again?" said Rebecca.

"Certainly," said Mrs. Tryon: "unless the Book lies, 'I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.' I think that finishes the argument, Miss, if there were any. Piff."

The gentle Mrs. Camp changed the conversation by arriving, after a short absence with her husband, laden with quaint boxes and quainter bottles, the spoils of the East.

"We sailed to Levant last voyage, Miss," she said, "and we brought these things home, for friends. And if Mr. Morley and his sweet-heart (I know no better word, Miss Turner) are not friends, who are? Here are figs from Syra, better than you can buy, and here are the little grapes, from Xante (you call them currants), which I laid in sugar by my own hand, just before baby was born. You don't take wine, I doubt; but take a little to-day, for our sakes; this is some that my old man bought at St. Lucaz, Spanish wine, strong, but very good. Do be hospitable, my dear young lady, with a Devonshire woman, and drink a little drop of wine with us."

Rebecca consented most willingly, and indeed the wine was most admirable wine, like port, a wine not got in this country.

"You find this cabin close now," said Mrs. Camp, as soon as the boy, who had waited perfectly, as he waited from good-will, had been sent to his dinner, and baby was established on his throne. "You would feel baked in such a little cabin as this."

"It is the nicest place I have ever been in," said Rebecca. "I suppose it is different in a gale of wind at sea?"

"Ah!" said Mrs. Camp, "I have been through it all more than once, with the old man, in this cabin. This ain't our first baby, Miss Turner. Our first was drowned down there, under that locker, behind you, when I lay drowned, and nigh dead on this very place, with my head cut open."

"Well, we don't want to hear about that," said Mrs. Tryon. "Sailors' wives have their trials, and you have had yours. Similarly I have had mine. Similarly Miss Turner will have hers. Why, my boy was eighteen when he sailed for the West Coast, and never came home again. Therefore, what are your troubles to mine?"

"That is very true, Mrs. Tryon," said the humble Mrs. Camp; "and I am wicked to think of my little troubles, in any way. But I think I am sentimental to-day; and that is what a sailor's wife should never be. I suppose it is because I went to Sacrament with the old man for the last time."

"What do you mean by the last time?" said Mrs. Tryon, sternly.

"I didn't mean any harm," said Mrs. Camp. "But we are going to the West Coast."

"Better folks than you have been to the West Coast and come back again," said Mrs. Tryon. "Don't cry out before you are hurt. The *Cleopatra* has only lost ten hands in eighteen months. Of course, if you, in your lazy, merchant way, choose to moor in a mangrove swamp, you will all die. Veer out a couple of cables, and lie well off shore, out of the land-fog, as her Majesty's ships do, and you will come to no harm at all. If you sneak into fever holds you will have fever. Mr. Morley, I am going to chapel."

Mr. Morley, who had been having a quiet conversation at the end of the table with Mr. Camp, asked Rebecca if she was inclined to go; but told Mrs. Camp that he was not going to chapel, but had provided for his duty.

"Then why not stay longer with us?" said Captain Camp. "We shall never see you again."

"She and I have much to speak of, as you may understand," said Mr. Morley. "I only said the words to her this morning."

"You have a prize," said Captain Camp.

"Yes, indeed," said Morley. "I have known her, and watched her for long."

"What does Hetty think of her?" said Captain Camp.

"She has never seen her; and Rebecca knows nothing of Hetty. Jack Hartop is the only one of our local connection who has ever seen her."

"But, my dear minister, is this concealment wise?"

"Hagbut hates Hetty so; and he is all-powerful."

"That is true. Well, Miss Rebecca is a trump, at all events. Good-by."

And Mr. Morley and Rebecca crossed the ladder, and stood again on the wharf. The afternoon had become wild and rainy, and the tide was going down; and Mr. Moriarty's ship's maintopsail-yard was (through Mr. Moriarty's careless arrangement of hawsers) rapidly approaching Mrs. Tryon's bedroom window. Mrs. Tryon had resigned herself to this fresh desecration of her hearth-stone, and gone to chapel: the Camps had got ready for a sailors' dawdle among the ships. But our two set their heads westward, knowing that their end for the present was Walham Green.

"Could you get on with such people as those, Rebecca?" said he. "If I was long away, could you live with them?"

"I could live and die with them," said Rebecca. "Those people are alive, ours are dead. Is the sea so cruel as they tell us, dear?"

"The sea is very cruel. The world is cruel, also. Come, *you* have seen that."

"I shall have to wait for you?"

"Yes."

"I wish I could wait for you there. Mrs. Tryon is better than Miss Soper; and I do so dearly like those Camps."

"You will hardly see much of them," said Mr. Morley; "they are bound on a long voyage."

Ay, indeed, they were. An old, old story, read in the papers every day; but a wearisome one to tell, from sheer reiteration. The Camps sailed away on ebb-tide, a week after this, with their baby, and their apprentice, and five hands all told. And they sailed westward, before the east wind of late March; and they sailed away into the golden west of early spring, and nothing was ever heard of them from that day to this. Nothing will ever be heard of them until the sea gives up her dead. They had taken the Sacrament together for the last time on earth.

To Rebecca they had been like a bright gleam of sunshine, on the happiest, most April-like day of her whole life. In the times soon to come, when she was all alone, watching a dying life, behind windows which quivered and rattled in the furious blast, she would hear the cry of sailors mooring their ship. And she, in that vague, foolish superstition, of which those who have watched long by the beds of the dying can tell you, would slip down silently, saying "That is Camp's ship." But it never was Camp's ship, and it never will be; for Camp's ship, wife, baby, boy, and all her crew, are at the bottom of the blue, wandering sea.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOME AGAIN.

Rebecca got home soon after afternoon chapel, and Mr. Morley left her at the door. She was very quiet and cool over what had happened, not seeing any great reason why she should be otherwise. Mr. Morley had bidden her tell her father at once, and she went up stairs to do so very quietly.

He was sitting alone, with the little dog on his knee, reading the "Pilgrim's Progress." His mind was perfectly quiet and unclouded this day, and he brightened up when he saw his handsome daughter before him. The little dog wriggled and scolded in his lap to get at her, and Mr. Turner put her down and smiled when she ran to Rebecca.

"My dear father, I hope you have not been dull?"

"No, daughter. I have been very happy. I was at the Communion with you in spirit; and I was glad to think that you were in pleasant, goodly company. Come and tell me where you have been."

"Please, pa," said Rebecca, kneeling at his feet, "I want to tell you something very particular indeed. Mr. Morley has asked me to marry him, and I have said that I would, if you would let me. And you will let me, won't you?"

"I am very glad of this," said Mr. Turner;

"this is the only wish I had in this world, I think. I am very glad, my dear; God bless you. Try to be worthy of him."

"I will, father, indeed."

"I doubt you will be very poor," said Mr. Turner, as soon as Rebecca was seated. "You will have about £120 a year—he will never have any thing to speak of. He is not a drawing man, to any except the poor. But I don't see why you should not be happy. I'll tie your money up, and you shall have it when you marry. Four thousand pounds is all I can guarantee you. There may be a little more; but I can't tell. Hagbut is a near man."

"I was not thinking of money, father," said Rebecca.

"It would be extreme indecent if you were," said Mr. Turner; "but I was. I have secured you from actual poverty, and Hagbut is hard and near; and I gave my word to certain things with regard to Carry, or we should have had her on our hands forever and a day; and my word is as good as my bond. Beyond this four thousand pounds I can only give you Hobson Bay scrip, which may be worth something or nothing, but which has escaped that man's ferret-eyes. You won't starve, Rebecca."

"Pa, don't talk about money to-day."

"Well, I won't. Get me my tea."

She soon did that, and made him comfortable before the fire. "Come," he said, "don't take all the good things to yourself; give me the little dog," and Mab, a black peaked nose and hair, was handed reluctantly to him by Rebecca.

Mab had a great idea of Mr. Turner, considering him in the light of an idol or fetich, requiring continual propitiation and flattery. So she scuffled over his waistcoat, licked his face, and only desisted from her cultus of him when he gave her a little slap, after which she was quiet. Rebecca thought that she had seen the same sort of thing before in certain chapels; and indeed one may see the same in certain churches also.

"Pa," she said, when Mab was quiet, "tell me all about the Establishment."

"I don't know much about it. Is he going to join it?"

"Lor, no! He would die sooner. Only I wanted to know."

"Well, the Establishment is the gentleman's church. Never mind the Establishment. You listen to me, girl, and never you mind the Established Church."

"I was only talking to amuse you, Sir; and I will trouble you to remember that I have taken brevet rank, that I am engaged to Mr. Morley. So no airs."

They were but silly words, but they were said so prettily that Turner himself laughed for a moment. "Come, girl," he said, "you are happy to-day, and indeed, old Rebecca, I am happy in your happiness. I assure you that I am; but I am in trouble after trouble. Are you going to him at once, for I am sore bested, and I want you at home?"

"My dear father, he has asked me to wait a very long time, and I have told him that I could not leave you, and that *he* must wait a very long time."

"That is good," said Mr. Turner; "that is very good. Listen carefully to me, for my mind is unclouded to-night, and it may be clouded again to-morrow; for I have had a hard life of it, child. I have never had a day's holiday; and your mother—well, never mind her, poor dear, you have made it square between us—and my head goes at times; listen now, and be mute."

Rebecca listened intently.

"You have heard of the great house of Gorhambury & Co. (limited, in all ways save an unlimited smash)?"

Rebecca nodded.

"Well, they are hopelessly smashed for two millions and a half of money. They have been bankrupt for a long while; and their last effort was to get our cousin Ducetoy's title-deeds, and lease money on them, by which he would have been brought into the bankruptcy. His father had meddled and muddled with them in the old times, before they were a Company; and they thought they could connect him with the Company. I have saved him—utterly illegally."

"But he is nothing to us."

"He was your mother's cousin, and I owe her reparation," he said, gloomily; "I have papers which would tell one way, I don't say which. But they dare not ask for them."

"You mean papers which would involve Lord Ducetoy?"

"Yes, and I am acting illegally in withholding them."

"Then why do you withhold them?" asked Rebecca. "Be sure it is best to follow the law."

"I don't know that," said Mr. Turner; "I have seen too much of law. These papers, if produced, would put Lord Ducetoy's property into the bankruptcy."

"But the creditors," said Rebecca, aghast; "the poor souls who have invested their money—have you no pity for them?"

"They would take any advantage of the Company, and they must take their chance."

"But, pa, wrong can't make right. I am sorry for Lord Ducetoy, but for Heaven's sake restore these papers."

"I can't," said Mr. Turner.

"Nonsense. Why not?" asked Rebecca.

"Because I have *burned* them," said Mr. Turner. "Now as you have your father's character, and in consequence his life in your hands, I wish to point out another little matter, more in your way of business."

Rebecca, sitting pale and calm, was dumb from that moment and forever about her father's felony. But their relations from this moment were altered, never to be replaced on their former footing.

She never showed this fact to him, but he knew it, and acted on it. He was deferential to her after this. Sometimes he was insolent to her, but very seldom, and for a very short time; he was generally easy and almost jocular with her, but from this moment she was in a way mistress of the situation.

She had now entered into a community of guilt with her father. That her father's motives were of the highest order was certain, but still her father might be a convict to-morrow.

What was the effect of this singular community of fault between them? A strange one to ordinary eyes. A love which had never existed before. If pity, combined with admiration and fear for the object, does not produce love, what does? Again, if admiration and trust do not

produce love, what again does? These two hearts were together now.

But I must return to the original conversation. Rebecca said, "But these documents will be demanded of you, pa!"

"No, they won't, my dear. I have too many forgeries, those of my own name among others, by Sir Gorhambury and Captain Gorhambury, for them ever to ask for them. Our danger does not lie here."

"Where does it lie then, father?" said Rebecca.

"In this," said Mr. Turner; "they will try to get into the house, and murder me to get at their own forgeries. So don't leave me, girl, and let the little dog sleep with me."

And so he went to bed. And Rebecca spent the first evening of her engagement in brooding over the fire, alone and terrified.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THALATTA.

The very next afternoon Mr. Morley called, and was told by the little maid that Miss Turner was too ill to see him, but she gave him a note, which he, as is usual in such cases, opened and read:

"Dear Sir,—Let yesterday be as though it never had been. Forget it, and forget me. It was all a mistake from beginning to end. I should like to have seen Hetty; but that can never be. My love for you is unalterable. I never loved any one on earth as I do you. But what we talked of yesterday is utterly and entirely impossible. Rebecca."

Morley stepped into Mr. Turner's study, and taking pen and ink, wrote:

"Come down stairs directly, and tell me all about it. Don't keep me waiting, for I have news for you, and but little time to give you. Look sharp, and don't dawdle. A. M."

So she came down. She was very pale, but there was no sign of wildness about her. He was shocked at her appearance, but he did not show it at all. He received her affectionately and kissed her.

"My dear Rebecca," he said, "can you explain to me the meaning of the note you sent me down just now?"

"No, Alfred," she said; "an explanation would involve others."

"So I have supposed for a very long time," he answered. "I have quite expected to hear of something like this for a year past. But that note I got this morning from you was never written. It don't exist."

"I am no fit wife for you," said Rebecca.

"I am surely the best judge of that. You are held to your words, Rebecca. Have you repented of that silly note? Can not you trust me, as I am going to trust you?"

"If you knew all, Alfred!"

"Bah! sweet-heart; I know more than all. Do you think that your sister knows nothing? Do you think that Hagbut has not got it out of her? Do you not think that Russel and Soper have not heard of it from him, and illustrated it? My story is, that your father has raised money on Lord Ducetoy's title-deeds to pay Carry's marriage-portion."

"You never dared believe it of him?" said Rebecca.

"Not for one instant," said Mr. Morley, laughing; "only, this being the report about him in our little society, I asked his daughter to marry me. There is very little time to talk nonsense, my dear; let us therefore talk sense. If your father's affairs got utterly wrong, what earthly difference would it make between *us?* And under any circumstances, you know," he went on, laughing louder, "you can never be the plague and disgrace to me that Hetty has been."

Whenever he mentioned Hetty a smile came on his face, and a brightness in his eye. What had Rebecca to say to such wooing? Why, nothing.

"I repent. I am all yours. I will never distrust you again."

"Bravely said. Now I am going utterly away from you, to leave you entirely alone, without one solitary friend, for a long time. I have no hopes in England; my chapel is only full of sailors, and sailors do not pay. But our connection has given me the new Tahiti mission, wisely and well, for at Tahiti every one can manage the natives, but no one the sailors. Another man was appointed, but has got a good chapel and has refused. They offered it to me this morning, and it came to me like a gleam of light, pretty bird, that my work for my Master lay among the sailors, and I said yes."

"I see," said Rebecca, nodding her head and smiling; "this is good."

"I am half a sailor myself, you know, and I can talk to our wild boys in their own language without affectation and without mistake, which is a great thing; for men dislike following a man who exhibits ignorance on their own *spécialité.* They say, he talks seamanship, and makes errors which the cook's mate would be ashamed of; how can we trust him in other things? It is silly and illogical on their parts; but they are silly and illogical. For my part, I think the priest who simply confesses ignorance, and applies to them for instruction, will have a good chance with them; possibly better than mine. I mean the man who will show *them* his ignorance, and then show them their own. But we have not these men. Our men are all too scholastic; they will talk to our fellows about the one thing of which they know nothing—seamanship. Hagbut preached a nautical sermon at my chapel once, which made my ears burn with sheer shame; and the lubber believes to this day that he produced a profound impression—as indeed he did—of his own utter pretentious imbecility. I have not time to go into this. I feel that I am the right man in the right place; and, to use our Saviour's own words, humbly and reverently, 'I go to prepare a place for you.' Are you content?"

"I am more than content. You are doing well. Shall you be away long?"

"A year at least."

"A whole year? And when do you go?"

"The day after to-morrow."

"That is very sudden. But is all right and well, and very good, Alfred? I shall know that you are not lost but working, and shall stay by

home to prove to you that I am worthy of you. Yes. This is a little hard, and a little bitter too; but it is right and good. You have forgiven my folly of this morning?"

"Why, I really don't know that there was any folly to forgive. You acted exactly as I should have wished my wife to act. You are the dearer to me for it."

"May I help you with your preparations?" she asked.

"My chest is always packed," he answered, with a smile. "It does not take long to ship such an old sailor as me. One chest of clothes, and one of books, are all I own; and my landlady has taken good care of them."

"But I may come and see you off?" she asked.

"Surely," he said; and they passed on to talk of other matters, and talked until it was time for him to go.

She scarcely knew how to break this sudden resolution to her father; whether he would think it a kind of desertion on Mr. Morley's part she could not tell. He took it quite quietly, and only said, "So soon, hey! Well, I am glad he has left me you. We will wait for him together, my child; and perhaps when he comes to fetch you away you shall take me with you out of this hateful, miserable place to a happier one."

There was a wild surging wind from the northwest, bringing with it occasional heavy showers of cold rain and brilliant gleams of cold sunshine—one of those bitter days which are almost worse than any weather in England, except east. The river was brisk though dull, leaden, and muddy, dashing in short crisp waves against the piles of Trafalgar Terrace. Mr. Morley was gone on board a little higher up the river, and Rebecca had said the last words to him; she was standing at the edge of the river, in the piercing blast, wrapped up from head to foot, shielding her little dog from the cold, and watching the ships pass swiftly seaward until his should come.

It was not long in coming. A beautiful schooner eager for her battle with the sea, curving her sharp high bows in triumphant anticipation, flying before the swift squall with only a foretop-sail set. He stood upon the poop and waved his hand, and so the ship passed on eastward, under a gleam of sun, toward a heavy black cloud which lay upon her path, and he was gone. And she stood silently weeping on the shore, and holding her little dog, close to nearly the most desolate heart which beat in England that day.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HOMEWARD ALONE.

But by degrees her silent crying stilled itself, and, the cold blast arousing her, she turned resolutely westward against the wind, which, cold as it was, caused her but little annoyance, for the heavy weariness which showed itself in her gait, and the feeling of solitude which gnawed at her heart, made her indifferent to the weather.

A gleam of such happiness so rapidly overclouded. She had only had him for three days, and had never realized actually her position toward him. Never. Until she saw him on the deck of the schooner passing rapidly eastward down the river. Then she knew really, for the first time, that the man had wooed her so well—had, that is to say, understood her thoroughly, and persistently shown her the best side of herself, and of himself also; had petted and encouraged what was good in her, and ignored what was bad; nay, had gone so high in the art of wooing that he had shown her herself at her best, and himself as something better still; that she found there was no one like him in the whole of her little world, and she believed no one like him in the larger world beyond hers. She knew that she loved him entirely with her whole heart.

There was not much sentimentality in her love for him. He was very handsome, certainly, of a rare and peculiar beauty, dangerous to "the peace of mind" of most young ladies, but she thought little of that. It was his "way" which was so irresistible, and the impression left on her mind was that he had selected her, the poor wild girl who had been a plague to every one, to do her the highest honor that man can do woman. That he was a penniless, friendless, and unpopular man she never considered. She looked on him as having descended from a high pedestal of perfect truth and perfect virtue to do honor to her. She could not understand it, for, like most very noble people, she utterly undervalued herself; but the fact was the same. He loved her, and she had lost him.

So she thought as she set her face westward, in her solitude, toward her miserable home. If there was any mere sentimentalism in her deep love, it was not for Morley. She could not be romantic and sentimental about *him*. In fact, a sentimental young lady would scarcely have liked her lover sailing away in a foretop-sail schooner, for a twelvemonth, three days after he had proposed to her. In Rebecca's sensible eyes this only made him nobler and more dear to her; she was assured of his love, and could laugh at Russel and Soper, and all the rest of them.

But this young lady had a good deal of sentimentality also, but, strangely enough, or rather *naturally* enough, she reserved all her stores of that article, not for Morley, but for his daughter *Hetty*, whom she had never seen.

If one was a Frenchman one might write, "Sentimental love is born of Mystery. Calypso steps from her pedestal and assists Eros to bind the napkin over his eyes." But I am not a Frenchman, and so will not say it. There was certainly nothing Calyptic about Rebecca's love for Mr. Morley.

But with regard to his daughter. That young lady was a consummate mystery to her (which made Calypso step from her pedestal). And she had certainly, in some way or another, broken through all rules, which caused Rebecca to love her, while knowing nothing about her. (Calypso binds the eyes of Eros.) And so, fighting westward against the wind, she found herself thinking very much about Hetty. "She will be home before him, and we can talk together about him. I know that I shall love her."

Stereoscopes are to me only magnified photographs. Others have the stereoscopic eye. Let us look at her with a different eye—say the left.

There went wearily along the streets of Ber-

mondsey that day a weak, ill-clad woman with a baby on her arm, against the wind westward. There came such a driving, furious storm of cold rain that this poor woman was forced to put into an archway, and took this opportunity of opening her bosom and giving the baby her milk.

While she was doing so a shadow passed before her, and she hurriedly was drawing her shawl over the arrangement, when she saw that it was only a woman, and was more at her ease.

It was a singular woman too. Very young, very handsomely dressed, and wrapped up from head to foot in a shawl, the price of which would have kept that cowering woman for a twelvemonth. Her hat was of golden seal-skin, the value of which that poor woman had reason to know, and in it was set a storm-petrel, a bird that woman knew too well also. She carried her head high this lady, and was so beautiful in face and in carriage that the cowering woman turned away.

In her bosom this splendid lady had something which was not a baby, only a little dog, with bright eyes, who put its head out to sneeze.

She put her grand head down to look at it, and caught sight of her shivering companion. She spoke at once, in the high, clear, splendid voice of an unaffected English lady.

"My dear creature, you are very cold."

"Yes, my lady," said the woman, "but my master is colder."

"Where is he?" said Rebecca.

"He is gone to sea, my lady, with half his kit, poor dear. He broke his arm in the frost hauling a rotten foretop-sail halyard, and he missed a voyage, and we have pawned every thing, and now my man is gone to sea again."

"So is mine," said Rebecca, without thinking.

"Yes, my dear lady; but your good gentleman has his full kit aboard, no doubt. My poor man will be up reefing top-sails in the snow, thin clad, while yours is warm and comfortable."

"Do you worry and vex yourself all the time your husband is away?" asked Rebecca.

"What would be the good?" the woman answered; "I've got to live, and to hope."

"Has he left you money to live on?" asked Rebecca.

"Lord bless you, no; he hadn't got none to leave. He will bring back some, though."

"And what have you to live on, then?" asked Rebecca, deeply interested.

"Charing and needle-work."

"Have you plenty of it?"

"Yes," she said; "I don't need to be beholden; I have a connection among sea-faring men and women, and I can make my three shillings a week till he comes back."

"Look here," said Rebecca, suddenly and quickly, "our cases are similar in some way, but your necessity is greater than mine. I have money, you have not. Take this five pounds; I meant it to buy a present for him, but had not time. When you want more write to me."

"But I might be an imposter, miss," said the woman, aghast.

"Your words show that you are none," said Rebecca, and, giving her address, she walked quickly away.

Quiet, through having got thoroughly well tired, she turned, after an eight miles' walk, into her own dismal lane, and found herself confronted with Miss Soper and Mrs. Russel.

In small communities news fly fast: the whole earth is a small community now, thanks to the telegraph; hence our telegrams, which always require to be emphatically contradicted next day. It had got about in the small Walham Green connection that Mr. Morley was going to marry Miss Turner, but that she had shown such abominable temper that he had shipped on board a fast brig, and had gone to sea; and that she had started early that morning, down to the docks, to bring him to book. This was too good a thing for Russel and Soper to miss. She must come home some time in the afternoon, and so Russel and Soper cruised off the end of the lane, as Anson did for the Acapulco plate ship, knowing that if they could lay her by the board they would have something to reward them.

Their cruise was (comparatively speaking) as long as Lord Anson's, and in the end very little more successful. They made raids into the lane, and took Akin's house and Mr. Spicer's house—with tracts; but they were always soon on their post off the lane's end; and after a time the Acapulco ship arrived, and they boarded her, to the intense delight of Akin and Mr. Spicer, who were watching.

Rebecca, tall, handsome, fresh from the sea, head in air, with seal-skin hat and storm-petrel for ornament, thinking of things far away, was arrested by Russel and Soper. Mab, who had not been let to walk, had accommodated herself to circumstances so far; but Soper was too much for her, and she barked so furiously at that good lady that she was put down; a liberty which she used for a cloak of licentiousness, for she bit Soper's gown without a moment's hesitation, and kept hold of it too; which so agitated Soper that fat old Russel had to do the talking.

"She is a varmint little thing," said Akin to Spicer, in the distance.

"So is her mistress," said Mr. Spicer.

"My dear," said Russel, "we were here, and saw you coming. Are we to congratulate you?"

"On what?" said Rebecca. "Mab, you naughty little thing, be quiet."

"On your approaching marriage with Mr. Morley."

"No, I think not," said Rebecca. "He sailed for Tahiti this morning. But I am very much obliged to you, all the same."

"Is he coming back soon?" said Miss Soper, who had been delivered from Mab by Rebecca.

"I should think not," said Rebecca. "It is quite impossible that he can be back under a twelvemonth; possibly not for two years. But it is of no consequence that I know of."

And so those two very good people went away, and told the whole truth to the connection. And the whole truth was, that Mr. Morley had found out too much, and had shipped for Tahiti.

CHAPTER XXV.

HAGBUT IN A NEW LIGHT.

But to Rebecca's great and never-ending astonishment, Hagbut came out in an entirely new line at this juncture. Hagbut was stupid, vain, avaricious, and selfish. You will find such char-

acters in every form of religion, just as you will find Morley's. But Hagbut was an exceptional man. The man had power. He had put a few ends before him, social and religious; and in steadily pursuing those ends he looked neither to the right nor the left. The success of his own small religious connection, and his own personal governance of that connection, were his two great objects. Take him apart from those objects, and you would find a *man* not without strength, but who seemed narrow, because he referred all matters in heaven and earth to his own services and that of his own sect. If any matter did not appear to him to interfere with these two objects he *could* be just, and even generous.

Now Rebecca had done no such thing as the scandalous Hetty; and besides—and besides—well, he had been fond of Rebecca once on a time. And sometimes, when Carry was most religious, and most affectionate—when he was wearied with religious work, and would gladly have heard something of the world which he was bound to despise in words, Hagbut thought seriously that he had made a mistake. Rebecca would not have him, it is true; still, Carry, with her money, was a great bore, and Rebecca was worth ten of her.

Russel and Soper invaded him when he was thinking of these things, and saying to himself that he was glad the poor girl was so well fitted with Morley; and honestly, and, as far as he was able, tenderly wishing her good luck, Russel and Soper did not meet with the reception they anticipated.

"He has gone and left her," said Miss Soper. "Rebecca Turner was down after him to the docks this morning; but he has gone and left her."

"He has gone to provide a home for her," said Mr. Hagbut.

"Mr. Hagbut, it is not so. Mr. Morley has run away. She told us with her own lips that he was gone away, and that she didn't care when he came back."

"I know she didn't say *that*," said Hagbut, bending his ugly face on Miss Soper, and thrusting out his powerful jaw in a way which Miss Soper did not like. "What were her words?"

"Her words were that he was gone for a twelvemonth, and that it was no matter," said Mrs. Russel.

"See how you stand cross-examination, you two," said Hagbut. "I can't trust a word you say. Now look you here, you two. That girl is my sister-in-law, and a good girl too; and Morley is the most refined and educated man in our connection—a connection which wants, what I have not got, refinement and education more than most. I won't have Rebecca's name pulled about. She is a fine creature."

The more cowardly Russel was abashed at once; not so the more resolute and sourer Soper, who had never felt a man's influence, but who had got her living by bullying girls.

"You pulled her name about one time pretty freely yourself," said she.

"Yes; but that was my business. This is none of yours. You mind what I say, and leave the girl alone. I won't have her meddled with. Mind, I mean what I say."

And, indeed, he looked very much as if he did. Pale, ugly, and generally lazy as he was, there was an immense amount of powerful animation in the man, with a good deal of shrewd sense. Russel and Soper had brains enough to find out this; Rebecca had brains enough to find out more.

She was alone that evening, with an atlas before her, following Morley across the map, when the little maid told her that Mr. Hagbut was come to see her. And she said, "Show him in."

Mr. Hagbut came in, and they greeted one another civilly; after which Mr. Hagbut pointed to the atlas, and said:

"After *him?*"

"Yes."

"You are a happy woman, Rebecca, if it is all right between you and Morley. Come, sister-in-law, tell me that it is."

"It is 'all right,' as you call it," said Rebecca, laughing. "He is going to be away for an indefinite time; but we are, what the world calls, engaged."

"I wish you happy, most heartily," said Hagbut, leaning his ugly face on his great fat hands and looking at her. "It is your own fault if you are not. He is refined, and a gentleman; I am neither the one nor the other."

"I think you are a very good man, Mr. Hagbut," she said, looking him frankly in the face.

"I do among vulgar people, being vulgar myself. And I do good where a gentleman would fail. But, Rebecca, it is well we did not marry."

"It is very well, indeed," said Rebecca.

"I suppose you have often put this case to yourself with regard to me—'If I had married that ugly, fat man, without ideas, without the manners of a gentleman, without education, death would have been better than life.' You have put it so, have you not?"

"Not so strongly as that, Mr. Hagbut; but still very strongly," said Rebecca, with resolution.

"Did you ever put the other side of the question?" asked Hagbut. "Did you ever think of me? Did you ever think for one instant what a hell on earth (I beg pardon) my life would have been, tied for life to a beautiful, clever, refined, and furiously rebellious woman like yourself? You congratulate yourself on your escape; congratulate me on mine. We should not have lived together a month in decency; for my will is immovable."

Rebecca paused for a long time. At last she said:

"It seems to me, brother-in-law, that you are a very honest man. You served me ill once; but let us forget all, and be friends: God knows I want them. Come, brother-in-law, do not be my enemy, although we can never be companions; for we should squabble so dreadfully over ways of speech on religious matters, you know; and I doubt if we should agree with regard to Hetty."

"What do you know of her?" said Mr. Hagbut.

"Nothing. What has she done?"

"If you do not know, *I* see no reason for telling you. I have taken my side there, and will maintain it."

"Well, if you go against her, you will spare me?" said Rebecca.

Hagbut would not have taken an oath in a court of justice to save his life; but in his heart, without speech, he swore a deep and terrible oath then. No religionist can be without sentiment; and the deepest sentimental part of Hagbut's soul was aroused by the spectacle of this utterly solitary and defenseless girl, whom he had once thought that he had loved, in spite of his fear of her, alone against the world. Hagbut made affirmation silently to himself that he would stand between this poor child and the world, which meant their small connection. And he did it, like a leal and loyal soul. It is easy to see the worst of these men. You must know them to find out the best of them. For my part, I have known many ministers of religion. Roman Catholic verbiage or Dissenting verbiage may be offensive to the ear; but in twenty years I have only known two bad ministers of religion of any sect, and that is not a large percentage, after all: one speaks, of course, merely of a large personal acquaintance. Being on dangerous ground I will step off it; merely enrolling my opinion that the ministers of religion, with all their eccentricities, are the most valuable class in the community.

Hagbut spoke to Rebecca no more after this. Carry would have been jealous had she known that he had said so much. But Russel and Soper's vilipendings of Rebecca were now reduced to sniffs and glances.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE GAZETTE.

And so it came about that Rebecca, who began at the very beginning of this story by wishing herself dead, wished nothing of the kind now; but only wished, like Jane Eyre, "that she might keep in good health and not die."

Yet she was infinitely worse off than in the old times when she wished herself dead. She was in utter and entire solitude, for her father was not much better company than can be found in the saner side of Bedlam. She had not a soul to speak to in any sort of way approaching the confidential, except Mab, and Mab could not answer her.

Although Hagbut had stilled all tongues with his fat emphatic fist, yet even he could not prevent people looking at Rebecca in chapel; and she knew that they were looking at her, and she hated it. She never saw them looking at her, but she felt it; and the effect of this consciousness on her face was to produce an expression of calm, careless anger, which assisted devotion in no way whatever.

Had she known that they were only studying in a humble way her imperial, magnificent beauty, reading it like a book, and learning from it, as one learns art at first, from a great and traditionally authenticated picture, she might have been content, and have given them at times softer developments of her not very mobile face. But she thought they were only staring at her, and she hated her chapel worse than ever.

She felt this more than ever one morning, when she had gone alone, her father being too ill to come. "I will never go again," she said. "They hate me." And she stalked out through the crowd with her head in the air.

Soper was helping Russel along, and said, "Did you ever see any thing like *that?*"

"A bold-faced jig," said Russel.

"I mean," said Soper the schoolmistress, "did you ever see such beauty in all your life? Because I have had some experience, and *I* never did."

Soper and Russel went their ways, and Rebecca went hers. But she was followed home by two admirers.

Mr. Akin and Mr. Spicer. When they had turned into their own lane they came up beside her, one on each side, and spoke to her boldly and eagerly.

"Glad to see you about, Miss. Mr. Turner is quite well, I hope?"

"My father is not at all well," said Rebecca. "I am so glad to see you two at chapel."

"We will leave that alone, Miss, at present," said Mr. Spicer. "We want to speak to you very particular indeed, Miss. Don't us, Jim?"

"Indeed we do."

"You see, Miss," said Mr. Spicer the sweep, "we sweeps as a general rule are the cleanest of all working chaps, always taking a bath afore we turns in. But we have what we call the black bed, into which we turns in all our crock when there's a difficult flue early in the morning. And we got orders for Beaufort House, and (you won't tell on a man for breaking the act) I lay in the black bed with my youngest son Tom, to put he up the flue before the police was round. It was again the law, I know, but that boy loves his profession; I should say his art; for that boy is as much an artist in a crooked flue as the great Anelay is in the *Mysteries of London*. With a father's feelings I went with him, of course, and we was no sooner out of our house than he said,

"'See to those coves round Mr. Turner's, father.'"

"Burglars?" asked Rebecca.

"There was two on them, Miss. It was pretty dark, but we could see. One was a young swell, and the other I knowd."

"This is very alarming," said Rebecca. "What did you do?"

"I called out the name of the man I knowd. I said, 'Bob Syers, you hook it.' And he offered in return a low remark, referring to a misfortune of mine in years gone by; but he hooked it all the same."

"Whatever shall we do?" said Rebecca.

"Put the police to watch. Syers is well knowd, as is doubtless the young swell."

"I *can't* employ the police," said Rebecca, incautiously. "Whatever shall I do?"

In the following paragraph I am only speaking of what I have seen with my own eyes. It is wrong and immoral, but there it is, for better or for worse—a great deal for worse, I should say.

Rebecca had won these men. Not by her beauty, for their eyes were too utterly untrained to see her beauty. They would probably have pronounced Buckingham Palace to be finer than Wells, Bayeux, or Salisbury, and have called Winchester a barn. They would possibly have called a red-faced Devon lass far prettier than Rebecca; it was not her beauty which had won these men, it was her sympathy and geniality.

They were neither of them very respectable men, but either of them would have fought for her, merely in return for kind words and kind acts to their wives, at any time. Now that she had confessed to them that there was something the matter in her father's house, which forbade the police being called in, they would die for her or risk it. There was a new bond of sympathy between her and these gentlemen now, which made them ready for any thing in her behalf. It is all wrong and bad, but so it *is*. You don't know where the criminal class begins. *Still less do you know where the sympathy with the criminal class begins.*

And further, Mr. Turner, solicitor and Methodist, had been an offensive person to them both by his mere existence hitherto. Now that there was an obvious hitch in his affairs, insoluble by those enemies of mankind the Metropolitan police, they began to have a fellow-feeling with him which they never had before. The sympathies of people like Mr. Spicer and Mr. Akin are distinctly *not* on the side of the law. On all sentimental grounds they were perfectly ready to assist Rebecca.

"Lord bless you, Miss," said Mr. Spicer, "don't vex yourself. We will watch. You have got a little dog as will bark."

"Yes," said Rebecca, showing Mab.

"Pretty dear," said Jim Akin, "there she is. Let me have the handling of her, Miss, please. She is worth ten pound, Miss; there ain't a p'int about this dog which is at fault, Miss," he continued, nursing Mab.

"Never mind the dog, Jim," said Mr. Spicer.

"Ah, but I *do* mind the dog, Tom," said Mr. Akin. "You ain't a cynosure in dogs, you see."

"He'd serve six months for a rat-tailed terrier, Miss," said Mr. Spicer. "We all have our fancies. But see here; durst you fire a gun?"

"Yes, I know how; my father has shown me."

"Then," said Mr. Spicer, "every time that little dog barks, you fire a gun out a winder, and me and Jim will be with you. They won't try it on often, if you do that, Miss. Their nerves is never good. If it only comes to nothing at all, they will get scared; if we get 'em *in* the house, why, then, we shall know what to do. *You* needn't bother about the policemen. In fact, we don't want no police round here."

"I will do what you tell me," said Rebecca. "If any thing were to happen you could hold your tongues—keep silent—could you not?"

Mr. Spicer sniffed, and Mr. Akin, in giving back Mab, winked. "Tell her about the backer, Tom," said this coarse young man.

"Hold your tongue, you fool," said Mr. Spicer. "What do you suppose the young lady would want to know about the running of a two-penny half-penny, four hundred boxes of cigars, so high up the river as this, in a ballast lighter? I am ashamed on you. Good-afternoon, Miss; depend on us." And so they went.

Leaving Rebecca with the terrible impression that she had connected herself with the criminal classes, not through her own fault, but utterly without hope of extrication. She was so puzzled by her quaint position that she was actually whimsical, almost humorous over it.

"I shall be in jail, my dear," she said to Mab. "And you will be reduced to bacon and cold potatoes at Akin's until I come out again. I *wish* father had not broken the law in this matter, even from his very high motives. Bother you!" she continued, shaking her fist at the law of the land; "you will pass over Sir Gorham Philpott *and* Lord Ducetoy, and you will catch my father. You Brute, not if I can stop it."

She had come at her purpose before she reached home. Her father was in a very difficult position—retaining papers which he had no right to detain—detaining them on very chivalrous grounds. But he had only seen part of the consequences in a sentimental, or, as she put it, Walham Green way; the first thing she had to do was to put the Limehouse view of the question before him.

So she burst in on him suddenly, and said, "Pa, you have made a nice mess of it. They are going to rob and murder us all. They were about the house two nights ago."

"So I suppose," said Mr. Turner.

"So you *suppose*," said Rebecca. "Well, I tell you, pa, that I am not used to it, and that I am not going to stand it. Trampling about in other people's gardens, indeed! I tell you, pa, that I am not going to endure it."

"Are *you* going to leave me, Becky?" said Mr. Turner.

Rebecca had not calculated on this. The thread of her argument was raveled.

"Leave you, dear," she said, kneeling at his feet. "Why, father, father, I have no one left but you, now Alfred is gone. My dear, I will never leave you this side of the grave."

"Is Alfred Morley actually gone?" said Mr. Turner, eagerly.

"Yes, but he will come back. He is only gone for a weary year or two; just to leave us alone, you know."

"I thought from your manner that you were angry with me; stay by me."

"I was and am angry with you," said Rebecca; "you are moping and brooding when you should be acting. We want your brains to direct us; we will find hands to assist."

"We?" said Mr. Turner.

"Yes, we," said Rebecca; "Spicer and Akin and I, not to mention Mab. Tell us what to do."

"You have strange accomplices," said Turner.

"And you have done a strange thing. Their motives are as high as yours. They help us from mere love."

"What have they seen?" asked Mr. Turner, rousing himself.

"Our house was 'attempted' four days ago by two men. One, Syer, a burglar, and the other a young gentleman. Spicer the sweep knew Syer, and challenged him. The young gentleman he did not know."

Mr. Turner lay back in his chair and laughed—laughed again almost heartily; then he began to speak.

"My dear child, this is exactly as I supposed. The man Syer is, as you tell me, you being acquainted with the criminal class so intimately, a burglar. Now the young gentleman who was with him is Edmund Philpott, whose forgeries, those of my own name in particular, I hold."

"Well," said Rebecca.

"You may well say 'well,'" said Mr. Turner; "you don't understand business; indeed, no one will soon, and financing has come in, and the L. C. & D. can't exactly make out whether

Mr. P. owes them six millions of money or they owe him two and a half millions. But you understand enough for this. That a Limited Liability Company bought the Gorham-Philpott business for £500,000, and have made a mess of it, as limited companies always do and always will. We don't *want* limited liability, girl; we want unlimited responsibility. Ha! look at M. when he was short—what did the trade say to the limited liability companies? Why, they said, one and all, 'We will have the man, and not a parcel of irresponsible shareholders. We know the man, and the man is honest as knows the business,' says they; 'but we don't know 500 irresponsible shareholders;' and the trade pulled the man through, and there he is now. Well, child, you can't understand this, though every reader of a newspaper can. This Gorham-Philpott business was sold; and I gave up my position as their attorney. And, first of all, I did a wrong thing for our relation, Lord Ducetoy—I kept his papers here to save them from the smash. And, secondly, to save Sir Gorham I kept all the papers which young Edmund had forged."

"And you did well and nobly," said Rebecca. "You have broken the law, I doubt not; but I am with you."

"Well, that is finely said," said Mr. Turner. "But don't you go breaking the law; you know one is quite enough in a family. Listen and don't talk nonsense. The Limited Company has gone to unutterable ruin. The property of the old house was guaranteed to the Company, and their deeds must come into the Bankruptcy Court. Some I have burned in my brooding folly; some are here still. I hardly know, child, what I have destroyed and what I have not. But young Philpott has forged heavily; he believes that his forgeries are here, and he will murder us all."

"And indeed he will murder none of us," said Rebecca; "I'll sort him if he comes here. Pa, dear, what on earth ever caused you to be so silly?"

"As how?"

"As to burn those papers."

"Brooding and brooding," said Mr. Turner; "brooding about your mother eternally, for one thing. I don't know what I have burned and what I have not."

"Can't you look and see, pa?"

"No. I am gone beyond that. It kills me to look at papers. I am a lost man."

"Are you in debt, pa?"

"No. There will be money enough when I am gone. But Hagbut told me on our last meeting about business matters that he saw no signs of grace in me. And he is an experienced man in spiritual matters; therefore I doubt that I have never been convinced of sin, and am damned everlastingly. That is all."

"This is worse nonsense than the other," said Rebecca, furiously. "Pa, how can you sit there and talk like that, with the good God listening to you? Hagbut is a good fellow, but he ought to be hung if he told you that."

"He did not, my dear. I know it," said Mr. Turner.

"Well, I can do nothing with you," said Rebecca, "except ask you not to talk nonsense. Do you think they will try the house again?"

"Certainly."

"Shall you shoot young Philpott if you meet him?" said Rebecca.

The answer was a curious one. Mr. Turner raised a wan, pale face to hers, from which every kind of expression was banished. Her father's brain had gone. The mechanical work of his office for so many years, his terrible troubles with his wife in old times, and this last miserable, silly, inextricable confusion, had been too much for him. Rebecca saw that she could not trust him again.

Once see that dead stare in the eyes of one you love, and love may remain; but confidence has departed forever.

Rebecca repeated her question, with an artificial laugh. "You won't shoot young Philpott, will you, pa?"

His answer was worse than his silence. He looked at her steadily, and with some recollection of the old days, of which she knew nothing, said:

"Trout should be as bright as peacocks before you should catch them. Or, to be more correct, like the butterfly called Vanessa Io. You should lay them carefully in cowslips and grass; an orchis or two atop is not amiss; Morio or Pyramidalis would do; but, above all things, a sprig of 'Geum,' which the hinds call 'Avens,' Lord knows why. Seek also in the damp meadows for your Ophioglossum, and put a piece of it in your biggest trout's mouth. And when she sees it she will know what you mean by her. And she will walk in the sun along the south wall, and will pick for you rosemary, old man, and the flower which fools call 'prince's feather,' but which wise men call, 'Love lies a-bleeding.' That is what she will do, and then go and marry George Somers."

"Lord help me!" said poor Rebecca, "his mind is gone."

Not gone, Rebecca, only babbling of green fields. Most men have lived at least three lives before they get married, and once and for all lay every thing at the feet of one woman. He was only dazed a little in his brain, and, as I have noticed in dying men, reverting to the first of his lives—a life she knew not of. He was shrewd enough next morning; his keenness was more painful to her than his wandering.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE WALPURGIS NIGHT.

Mr. Turner slept, or pretended to, till nine o'clock; then he began furiously ringing his bell. Rebecca came to him in her dressing-gown.

"Is the *Times* come, child?" he said.

"How could it be come, pa?"

"Go Eastward, child, and meet it. Quick, go!"

She dressed herself and went Eastward; she had got nearly to the South Kensington Museum before she got the *Times*, and she hurried back with it. Her father sat up in bed while he opened it. After glancing at a column or so, he said, "What a thundering lie!"

"What, pa?"

"Philpott & Co., Limited," he answered, "bankrupt for £800,000. Why, child, I could account for £1,200,000. I will have another nap

after that. If any genteel looking man calls, tell him—well, tell him he had better call somewhere else. We know too much here."

What between Turner's wildness of the night before, and his shrewd jocularity now, poor Rebecca was utterly puzzled. One thing she knew, and that was that Morley, Hartop, and the never-seen Hetty were all at sea, that her father's mind was going, and that she with her affectionate heart were alone in the world together.

One can see how our nation has developed by turning over old novels; for one, over *Dombey and Son*, written by Dickens, a man not unacquainted with the ways of this world, but by our new lights rather behind his time, in a few particulars.

For instance, Mr. Dombey goes bankrupt for the mean sum of one hundred thousand pounds. That was all very well in 1848, but we have improved on that since. Mr. Perch, the messenger, congratulated himself on the fact that Dombey had gone for "one hundred—thousand—pound." That is but a small smash now. Great, and heretofore trusted names in trade, seem to be vying with the worst of the old aristocratic scoundrels, and beating them hollow. The frightful recklessness of the habitual gambler, Lord Mornington (about £700,000, leaving no one unpaid in the end), or that of the unhappy boy just dead (some £200,000), is fairly beaten out of calculation by the deficiencies of some of the clearest and best heads in the world of business. How these men can keep sane under such a nightmare of hopeless debt is the wonder to some. See if this little case of the Philpotts is overstated in any way. Do we not all know of an honored (justly honored) member of the House, now dead and beyond trouble, who sat later than any one at the House; sat through the most wearisome of business, *sooner than go home?* There was a leaden weight of £300,000 on that man's soul. That hopeless deficiency of capital, which well used would have saved Bethnal Green, or the Isle of Dogs, from their present state, hanging on his mind, hanging round his neck. It was no error of his, but of younger branches of his family. He was one of the purest, best, and noblest of men, but condemned to silence for the love which he bore to his family.

Such an old age is not good to think about. Better to study William Blake, when he is most wildly melancholy, and most unutterably sad. Still in Blake's deepest sadness there is always tenderness and hope. And so we should think of this poor member, who had never one selfish thought in his heart. Turn to Blake's great master-piece, *Death's Door** (which I have known since I was six years old, and which never palls on one), when you think of an old man, dishonored through no fault of his, creeping to his tomb, as Sir Gorham Philpott was to his.

The younger members of a dishonored family will, however, sometimes make a fight to save what can not be saved, more particularly where there has been criminality. Young Philpott was distinctly criminal. He had forged more boldly than Sir John Paul. He was, unlike that man, dissolute, dissipated, and utterly reckless. He was perfectly safe if he could recover his own forgeries, and he knew that Turner had them all. Could he get those forgeries in his own hand, he was well provided for. With a view to these contingencies he had bought heavily in foreign funds, denying himself every kind of luxury to do so. In the case of a mere bankruptcy, these funds could not be tracked; but in the case of a criminal prosecution, his money was of little value to him, for he would spend his time at Portland. This made him desperate.

Another thing made him still more desperate. This young forger was a very handsome young fellow, of good manners. And his family had caused him to make a great alliance with another great house. And so he had married, somewhat against his will, one of the most beautiful and charming women ever born.

He married her first, and fell in love with her afterward, as is often the case. His love for her grew as time went on; her exquisite grace, her perfect equable temper, her beauty, her deference to him, her intelligence—all had their effect on him. And after two years he awoke one morning, by her side, and saw the whole of his very ghastly position. He was a felon, who might be in Cold-Bath Fields to-morrow, and she thought him an honest and respectable man.

"She would stand the bankruptcy, but she could not stand *that*," was what he said. "By the Lord, I have a good mind to tell her the whole business and get it over."

So it happened one morning that Mrs. Philpott, turning over in her bed, found her husband kneeling at the bedside with the sheets bathed in blood. "I have hurt my head," he said. "I got out of bed incautiously and have broken my head over the dressing-table." She was piteous and tender over his accident; little thinking that the young man in his mad despair had rushed against the wall. Enough of such things; the man was desperate.

His desperation little matters to us save that he brought it to Turner's house, and so involved our Rebecca and her dog Mab. In a little story about homely facts like these, one has not room for one's rascals. Neither has one the genius of Shakspeare to develop one's rascal (Falstaff) until loving gets to be right, and one loves him.

Rebecca said to her father, "Pa, haven't you made a great mess of it?"

"Very great indeed, my dear."

"Why don't you tell the whole truth, pa?"

"Because I should be in Cold-Bath Fields Prison, my dear."

"But we can't come out of it, dear pa, any way."

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* Notes are very unpopular, but one seems necessary here. The piece I mean is to be found at p. 224 of Gilchrist's *Life of Blake*, but has been copied many times. A bent old man, doubled up with age, is hobbling on crutches into a vault. He is not well clad, and the winds of the world are blowing on him from behind, and helping him toward the dark doorway—a half-open iron door set in Cyclopic stone-work. The attitude and gait of the old man are, as far as my experience goes, not only unapproached but unapproachable. Many Frenchmen—and a few Englishmen—can paint action in double-quick time. Blake here has expressed action, not in double-quick time, or even in quick time, but in *slow* time. I have no space to descant on the marvelous sentimental beauties of this wonderful piece, worthy to rank with Michael Angelo's Lorenzo de Medici. Below the feet of the old man, dimly seen in the darkness, are the barred windows of the charnel-house, to which we must all come. But above and aloft, in blazing sunlight, is the newly-awakened figure of a young man rising naked and wondering into the wonders of the new life.

"My dear child," said Mr. Turner; "the whole thing is a stalemate at chess. No one dare move for his life. I have seen worse muddled matters than this got through." And indeed he gave her proof.

"Why, even in Paul's case," he said, "if it had not been for a high-minded and indignant parson the whole thing would have dropped through. I tell you, child, that you don't know business. Nobody is safe except a magistrate's butler. I am very, very tired again, Rebecca. I am going to die."

"Pa, you had better go to bed again if you talk such nonsense as that."

"I am going, my dear. I shall sleep through the day, and wake at night. They will try the house to-night. Be ready for them."

"How shall I be ready for them, father?"

"Bless the girl, I don't know. Ducetoy's deeds are in the iron safe. Philpotts' papers are in the box under my bed. Do the best you can, child; I am horribly drowsy—deadly drowsy. They will try the house to-night, and if the house gets into the possession of the police, I can't say what will happen. Go and see to matters, I am going to sleep."

Rebecca, seeing that there was nothing more to be got out of her father, did probably the quaintest and most indiscreet thing which she ever did in all her life. Matters were very desperate with her. Anticipated disaster had been familiar with her for some time. But here was disaster itself. Disaster of the very worst kind. She knew perfectly well that in the opinion of experienced lawyers about the great bankruptcy of the Philpotts, her father must sooner or later, through his folly, be involved. How deep she knew not. Her father, with the highest motives possible, had broken the law. She went for advice and assistance to people whom she dreamed had had some experience that way themselves.

It was twelve o'clock, high noon, when she put her hat on and stepped across the lane to Mrs. Akin.

Mrs. Akin was in a deluge of soap-suds. She took in washing. Rebecca said to her, "Mrs. Akin, is your husband at home?"

"Dear Miss," she said, "no. He is out with his barrer. There is some husbands, Miss, which you will find yourself, when you are married, and a nicer gentleman I never see, I am sure, who objects to any washing at home at all, but wants it all put out, and I am sure I hope for your favors, Miss. Some will stand one washing-day in the week, and some won't. But my dear man, he has a washing-day every week, and never grumbles. He may come round home to dinner, Miss; but I ask you to look at his little home, full of damp linen; you are a-sneezing yourself. If he comes home, shall I make him step across?"

"If he would be so good," said Rebecca.

"He would step further than that for you, Miss," she said; "there is a little one in heaven pleading for you with us, Miss. The old fellow shall come across."*

Rebecca left the coster-monger's wife—not a noticeable woman in any way—and went next door, to the chimney-sweep's wife, who was decidedly a noticeable person.

She was a very stout, florid woman, with all the ill temper which is produced by the accumulation of fat round the heart; she scowled on Rebecca.

"Is Mr. Spicer at home, please?" she asked.

"No, he ain't."

"I am very sorry for that, for I wanted to speak to him."

"What about?"

"I only wanted a little advice," said Rebecca.

"I can give you some of that. Don't you go trampolineing about with those Methodist parsons too much. *They* are no good."

"I shall not have the chance of doing so any more, Mrs. Spicer," said she.

"And a good job, too. And now you have come to us for advice, I'll advise you a little more. Don't you come here unsettling my man's mind, and getting him to chapel, and setting his mind to the keeping of the law about the boys. Why, I suppose your advice has cost me a cool £20 a year. He won't send a boy up a flue now since he has taken to consort with *you*. And, if you knew any thing at all, you would know there was flues which could not be swep' without boys. And our connection resents it naturally. My man says, 'It is agin the law,' and they make answer, 'Do you accuse us of abetting an' breaking the law?' and he, with his spirit, makes answer, 'I do.' 'Then you need not call again, Mr. Spicer,' they says; and that is *your* doing."

"You are very impertinent and entirely wrong," said Rebecca; "if I have prevented Mr. Spicer, my very good friend, from sending boys up these horrible chimneys, I am very glad. I would have any one transported who sent those children up the chimneys. I want to know when Mr. Spicer will be at home."

"Then you just sha'n't. I don't want him near yours. There's worse gone on in that house than sending boys up flues. Better send a boy up a flue than chuck a woman down stairs. You sha'n't see him—you sha'n't see him. Lawk, old man, is that you?"

It was indeed that worthy chimney-sweep, who had been awakened by his wife's voice, and had heard the whole of the argument while he was dressing. And a very fine, grave-looking man Mr. Spicer was, too; ugly, but rather grand, owing none of his good looks to his complexion, which was rendered very pale by daily applications of soot. He laid his hand on his wife's shoulder, and with the cool determination which seems almost a *spécialité* in his trade,* beckoned to her to retire, which she did, perfectly dumb.

"We will walk across the road, Miss, if you please," said Mr. Spicer, and he led the way.

* To meet any charge of want of verisimilitude from any one not acquainted with the laboring classes as well as myself, I have reproduced actual dialogue. One has no reply to criticism: which is a pity. A man who cares for the opinions of the most able of the weekly press, writes in fetters—as I do. I suppose I should do otherwise; but abuse gets a wearisome thing after a time.

* Chimney-sweeps are but little known or understood. Very few people know that that splendid young man Sadler, who raced Kelly himself so hard the other day, was a chimney-sweep. I was trying once to make peace between a working bricklayer (Harris) and a working cooper (Letwell). Old Harris struck out in pride of family; Letwell's sister (I think) had *married a sweep*. Old Harris afterward got two months for a violent breach of the revenue laws, about which I had warned him; so I suppose there was no further question about family precedence.

As soon as they were clear of the house he said, "The best woman in the world, Miss, if you only knew it."

"So I should fancy," said Rebecca; "she don't like me; but there are many others who don't. In fact, I don't at all like myself."

"Indeed, Miss!" said Mr. Spicer.

"No," said Rebecca; "I don't like myself at all. I don't *hate* myself, Mr. Spicer; I only dislike and despise myself. For you know, Mr. Spicer, I am a most contemptible fool."

"Indeed, Miss. Now, I should not have thought that, unless you had told me. But it is no doubt true. You are better educated than I am."

"You are not a gentleman, Mr. Spicer," said Rebecca, laughing in spite of herself.

"No, Miss; but in what particular?"

"When any one accuses themselves to a *gentleman*, Mr. Spicer, the gentleman excuses them. Now, you have confirmed my view of myself, doubtless from politeness; but still, you are no gentleman. You should have told me that I was one mass of wisdom; as it is, you have merely confirmed my opinion, somewhat emphatically, that I am a contemptible fool."

"I only meant to mind my manners, Miss; and my manners tell me that you should never contradict a lady. That is what Mr. Hagbut calls the unwritten law. That is about the size of *that*."

"Well," said Rebecca, "we must not joke any more, Spicer; I am in serious trouble."

"We know all about it, my dear Miss," said Spicer; "the only question is, When and where?"

"The *when* is to-night, I am afraid; and the *where* will be inside the house."

"Then there is no reason for much talk, Miss. The least said the soonest mended. Bob and I will come in and lay down any where."

"But I want to explain to you," went on Rebecca.

"Just exactly what we don't want, Miss. We want to know nothing. Did you ever hear a man cross-examined?"

"No."

"Ah! If the grand jury would take the trouble to follow some of their 'true bills' down stairs, instead of going off to play billiards, they wouldn't send so much down stairs as they do. I don't want no cross-examination, unless I can say No. Tell me and Bob what you want done, but nothing more."

"Can Mr. Akin and you sleep together in one garret? And can you know nothing at all?"

"We can sleep together well enough, and we can easy manage holding our tongues, if there is nothing told us to talk about."

"Then come about ten o'clock, please, and I will have every thing arranged for you."

Her father slept all day, but at night got up and dressed himself, and took dinner and wine. Then, setting all the doors open, he walked up and down the house. At the last she told him what she had done; and he, having got feeble and ill again, was persuaded to go to bed, with his clothes and his pistol all ready.

"I shall not sleep a wink," he said; and saying so, laid his weary head over, and was asleep in one moment.

Then Rebecca began *her* tiger walk up and down the house, until Mr. Akin and Mr. Spicer turned in. Mr. Akin, a scientific and experienced hand, got Mab, and put her to sleep in the small of his back; which, as he explained to his companion, was the wakefulest place of all for a dog. Mab was well enough content, and scarcely recognized her mistress during her frequent visits to her two sleeping friends. For they soon slept, after a consultation about taking off their boots. Mr. Spicer could never, he said, sleep well in his boots, unless he was three-quarters on. But Mr. Akin, having pointed out to him that this job would come to rough-and-tumble in any way, or might come to Chevy-high-ho the grinder, Mr. Spicer determined to sleep without even the removal of his boots; which determination he put in force with the rapidity of a man who has to do his day's work long before other people are awake.

It was a wild night, dripping wet, with great rushes of wind from the westward—the middle of a wild spring—when Rebecca began her night watch. She set dim candles in different rooms, and began her walk up and down; going from her own room along the main passage at the head of the stairs toward her father's door, and passing that to the room where her two indifferent, honest friends slept and snored.

The wind hurled at every window and door in the crazy old house; and, with an ear tuned to concert-pitch by anxiety and nervousness, she listened for something more than the wind, but nothing came.

It would have been less dreary, perhaps, had the night been silent and still. But the dreariness of that house to one listening for suspicious sounds, and hearing a hundred, was terrible, even before the lane was still and asleep. After that, terror grew into horror, and horror into a kind of temporary loss of judgment.

Dim, inexpressible, causeless terrors come, I believe, on the most prosperous of us when we wake in the night in the dark. I know a military officer of good repute, excellent courage, respectable fortune, and without one solitary anxiety in this world, who takes his recreation in these sad, solitary hours, by thinking of *death*. By putting to himself that he must die some time or another, and trying to make out what the last, horrible hour will be like. Rebecca's fantasies, this night, were scarcely more reasonable than his.

There was very little cause for fear of any kind: there was nothing of what some call sensational about her position. She was splendidly protected. Her father had done a very quaint thing, but she had practically checkmated all consequences. Still, she was in a state of nervous anxiety; and that anxiety became precordial, and made her start with inexplicable terrors at every sound, and in passing every dark place. The physical effect of this nervousness was to make her knees tremble, and so cause her to walk unsteadily. The mental effects of it were still stranger.

For her anxiety began to take a single point as its culminating one. I do not think that this is by any means a rare case. A man confused in ruin, brought on by an accumulation of causes, will say that he always knew that the beginning of it was some twenty-pound speculation. A man, dazed, stunned, and ruined by his wife's

death, will attribute it to her swallowing a pin ten years before, after his neighbors had been hearing her bark her heart out all the winter with tubercular disease of the lungs. Not well chosen as examples, possibly, but which will do. When people's minds are confused they will pick out a cause for a particular form of anxiety, seldom the right one. Rebecca did on this occasion. The door behind Carry's bed—disused, and locked and bolted for so many years—was the point she fixed on as the most horrible and dangerous point in the house.

It communicated, as the reader may remember, between the used portion of the house and the unused. Since her mother's death, that back staircase and all the adjacent part of the house had been closed up, and had been a mystery and a horror to them. In very early days, as early as Rebecca could remember, Carry used to have a habit of shrieking out suddenly in the night that some one was trying the door; after which she would fly, in her night-gown, and leave Rebecca in the terror of death. And now, on this, to her, as she believed, supreme night, Rebecca, with a solitary candle feebly lighting up the great room, stood before that door, and thought of what lay behind it.

What *was* there, locked up for twenty years, behind Carry's bed? The skin of her head had a cold, nervous creeping in it (which is what the romantic people mean when they say that So-and-so's hair stood on end). She had a horror on her which was indescribable, as awful as the horror which occasionally precedes death; it had a somewhat singular effect on her, for she moved Carry's bed out of the way, and looked at the door; and as she did so she saw that the handle was softly turned, and some one pressed on the door from the outside.

One bolt and the lock was all that opposed her. She had got into a state of horror by solitude and mystery. One simple physical movement, even of a door-handle, restored her to herself in an instant. "We will get this through, my gentleman," she thought, with a low laugh; and suddenly and dextrously unlocked and unbolted the door, threw it open, and said, "Walk in, if you please."

No one was there. There was nothing before her but a dark passage, ending in darkness. The solitary glance at her feet showed her, not only that no one was there, but that no one had been there at all. The dust of twenty years, so lightly laid by the hand of ever busy Nature, was untouched. The foot of a spider might be traced on it, but not that of a man. The door had been tried by hands not of this world.

So her horror revived again tenfold; but, in her obstinacy, she went on into the passage. And as she went she turned round and saw the marks of her own footsteps in the dust. She was the first there. There were no other footsteps. The door had been tried by a ghost: and she went on until she came to the head of the stairs, at the foot of which her mother had been picked up dead. And as she looked down them her candle struck against something, and she saw that it was a halter hanging from the ceiling, with a noose in it, ready for any man to put his head into. Had there been a corpse as ghastly as that of Bewick's over the trout-stream in it, she could not have been more unutterably terrified. She fled swiftly, with some member of the other world's skinny hand entwined in her back hair, with a view of detaining her and showing her a little more. But she was strong and resolute; and when she had got back to her bedroom, locked and bolted the door, put Carry's bed back, and found her back hair unruffled, she began to believe that she had been making a fool of herself, and thought she would go and look at her friends.

Mr. Akin was what you may call a violent sleeper. Like the famous Hackney-coachman of our youth, Tamaroo, whatever he did was done with fury and effusion. The frantic physical exertion which that young man had to go through in going to sleep would have ruined some constitutions. It was a University race to him going to sleep, and a ten-mile handicap (he starting from Scatch) for him to wake up again. At this time he was quiescent. He had taken off his velveteen coat, strangled himself with the arms round his neck, and suffocated himself by ramming his head into one of the hare-pockets. He likewise found it necessary to cross his left leg over his body, and hold on tight by his left boot with his right hand. It was impossible, in regarding this young man in his sleep, to avoid wondering what Mrs. Akin thought of it.

In a similar way, when one looked at Mr. Spicer at rest, one wondered whether Mrs. Spicer, in spite of accumulating wealth and good position, did not wish that there might be a few alterations in trifling details. For Mr. Spicer, though a quiet sleeper, lay on his back, and spread himself out in every possible direction, snoring magnificently. And, moreover, he talked in his sleep, very constantly, as people who sleep under constant expectation of being awakened always do. And Rebecca heard him say, as she watched them for a moment, "Jane's mother is a lie. The chaney and tea-spoons was give to you by word of mouth."

This was realistic enough to do away with the folly of the deserted staircase; her father's conduct dissipated her silly terror much more.

He was sitting up before his writing-table, examining papers and accounts. "Come in, old girl," he said. "Is there any news?"

"There is none yet, father," she said. "How are you to-night?"

"I am better, my love; hard at work, you see."

"Pa," she said, "is it wise of you to work?"

"My dear," he said, "believe an old man. Mere work never hurt any one in this world. Just look at the lives of our public men. Those who have lived the longest are generally found to have worked the hardest. Work don't kill: excitement does. This mechanical work which I am doing now is doing me more good than a doctor's shopful of medicine. Where have you been?"

"I have been frightened, father. I opened the door behind Carry's bed, and I got utterly terrified. There was a rope there with a noose to it, as though one was going to hang himself."

"You silly child, to frighten yourself with fancies when there is real danger abroad. That is the rope of the old bell which hangs in the cupola."

"Gracious me!" said Rebecca. "What a gaby I must have been not to think of *that!*"

"Did you see many ghosts?" said Mr. Turner.

"Heaps," said Rebecca.

"How many?"

"A dozen or two. One of them turned the handle of the door, under my nose."

"A ghost, you think? Be sure."

"Oh yes, a ghost. The dust on the staircase was quite undisturbed."

"You are sure of that?"

"Yes, I am quite sure."

"Because we must mind that they do not get in *that* way."

"I will put my sheets on Carry's bed, and sleep there," said Rebecca.

"I would if I were you," said her father. "Ho! They will not come to-night."

"Will they come at all, father?"

"They will most certainly come, one would fancy. But they will come soon, I should think. It is possible that they have been round the house to-night, and have seen us moving. Leave those two good fellows to sleep here for another night or so. We can reward them."

Morning dawned, and there was no sign of any burglary. Rebecca had a consultation with Mr. Spicer and Mr. Akin before they went away.

"My opinion is, Miss," said Akin (and Spicer hung on his words as on those of an expert), "that they won't try it on until every thing is quiet. Is it plate, Miss, or is it jewels?"

"Neither," said Rebecca. "Papers."

Spicer and Akin looked at one another and laughed. "Lord love you, Miss; that accounts for the swell being in it. Papers, oh? He'll get another professional hand—we sprung one—and they will make a mess of it at last. Have you got a pistol, or any kind of fire-arm?"

"We have pistols; but I am a little afraid of them."

"Well, we will sleep here, turn and turn about, for a week. Arter that, if you hear any thing fire your pistol and we will be with you. The little dog is your best alarm. I wish you and your father slept closer together. You trust to us and the little dog."

"Do you know any thing about the part of our house which is shut up?" asked Rebecca.

"The part under the bell-tower, Miss? No, I don't, and I don't want to."

"Come with me, then," said Rebecca. "Good-morning, Mr. Spicer, and a hundred thanks."

Akin, left alone with Rebecca, exhibited a strange unwillingness to follow her. Still you would be utterly mistaken if you fancied that a cockney was neither chivalrous nor superstitious. He would sooner have fought any man within a mile than have followed Rebecca. He would sooner have seen a man privately hanged than have gone into the disused part of the house, "where the accident was."

But she took him to her bedroom. "You see, Mr. Akin, you know more of this sort of thing than I do." (He knew more than he need have done.) "I am going to put my bed across this door. Just move that bed, will you, and come with me."

Akin followed most unwillingly, though it was broad day. "Do you see these footsteps?" she asked, when they were in the passage; "they are mine last night. Do you see any others?"

"There have been no footsteps but those of yourn for twenty years, Miss," said Akin, with emphasis. "Are you going any farther?"

"Yes," said Rebecca; "I want to see what is below."

And she led the way down the stairs, Akin following in the same state of mind as Shimei.

"You are quite right," she chattered, "the stairs are piled with dust. It was all my fancy last night about some one having got in here. There is not a foot-mark on the dust. See, here, at the bottom of the stairs, is a shoe with a blue rosette; I will have *that*."

"Come away, Miss, and leave it alone," said Akin, sharply; "there is ghostesses enough without yourn." For Akin had a shrewd suspicion that this shoe had been left there after the removal of Rebecca's mother from the very same place.

Rebecca got scared also, and came back with him somewhat hurriedly, with the ghost feeling at her back. But she brought the shoe with her too.

"If you put your bed across that door, Miss," said Akin, "as you propose, you stop 'em that way. I can't make out myself which way they will come. There is plenty if we leaves watching."

"*Do* you think they will come at all, Mr. Akin?" said Rebecca, confidentially.

"Will they come? I gather that there is forged papers. I gather that there is a swell with cash. I gather that the governor has those papers here. And that swell will come after those papers, with professional assistance, as sure as they apple-trees will blossom next April. Sooner or later he will have those papers. Why, if he will get two years for 'em, it stands to reason that he will chance three (and it's seldom more for a first offense), for stealing 'em. He'll come fast enough."

"What *can* poor father do?" said Rebecca.

"That is easy enough to tell," said Akin; "let your pa write to that swell, and say, 'Here, Tom,' and he says, 'you have been a-writing of other folks' names here, and I have got the writings. None of your gammon,' says your father; 'I've got your forged writing, and I'll Old Bailey you as sure as there *is* a Old Bailey.' Says your pa again, 'You have been a-hanging about my little place, and giving a world of trouble, keeping Akin and Spicer up all night, and my daughter and me sleeps habitual with Armstrong revolvers in consequence of your goings on. Why,' says your pa, 'you are a regular nuisance, that is about what you are. But I'll tell you what I'll do with you,' says your pa; 'you send me ten thousand pounds, notes of the Bank of England, and you shall have they documents. Not otherwise. There's been several rows,' says your pa, 'about convicted swells being kep' in the okum-yard, at the Ouse of Crection; but Portland is bleak for delicate constutions in the spring months, and the beaks theirselves has been touched up in some of their speculations, and they mean Portland and nothing short.' That is what your father ought to say to this young swell. Your father, as a gentleman, would naturally dress it up, and draw it milder than an ignorant man like me. Still, I wish the plant was mine. I'd have the old girl to Ramsgate every year if it was."

"It might be yours," said Rebecca, suddenly, with that strange heedlessness which was the great fault in her.

"Don't say such dreadful things as those, Miss," said Akin, turning pale; "that ain't worthy of you."

"What have I said?" said Rebecca, aghast.

"What was wrote in that book, Miss, which you give us, about Charles Steward?"

"The Pretender, yes. What have I said?"

"It is wrote down in that book, Miss, that Charles Steward, who had been up to some game or other, I never made out what, had thirty thousand pounds set on his head. And he was loose among the Highlanders (a bad lot), and not one of them gave the pleece the office on him, not one out of all them—not for thirty thousand pound. And you would rank me lower than a common Highland drover."

"Dear Akin, I did not mean it. I spoke only in compliment. I *know* you would never turn on us. Please don't be angry."

There was a child in heaven who had left her footprints behind her, which prevented Jim ever being angry with Rebecca. Still she had heedlessly touched his honor. There is a mass of potential chivalry in this queer nation of ours, to which, under our present military *régime*, we do not get. I wish I had the Queen's commission to raise a regiment. Kingsley's foot should be as terrible as my grand-uncle Kingsley's horse. And equally queer in their antecedents, I doubt. I should trouble Lord Shaftesbury for about two dozen from Field Lane to begin with.

To Rebecca the next fortnight was actually worse than any time since the breaking of the Gresham bank. Her father had told her that the house would be broken into for the forged papers, which was one evidence, and Akin, a most experienced man, had confirmed his opinion emphatically. So she believed in it day after day less and less, and after Mr. Spicer and Mr. Akin had taken to sleep at home she was quite comfortable. They were all wrong together. She had never really believed in it at all.

The weather might have been better, for even in this part of the metropolis it howled and raved. St. Swithin had been unpropitious, and the land was deluged and flown. Still, Mr. Morley was possibly safe, and wind was better than burglary.

"Pa," she said, one night, "they are not going to rob and murder us at all."

"I am glad to hear it, my dear; for I am getting very ill."

"Shall I sleep in your room, pa?"

"No. Let me have the little dog. That is a very dear little dog, Rebecca."

"You can have the dog, pa. She is very nice. Let me sleep in your room, dear."

"No, no," said Mr. Turner. "I am well enough, only I am very ill indeed."

"You have not been to the office for ten days, pa; you are not well."

"I am going to sell out of the business, my love. It was too much for me."

"And the papers?" said Rebecca.

"You will hear about *them*," said he. And they went to their respective beds.

Rebecca, with her bed across the mysterious door, went to sleep and dreamed of absolutely nothing. She told Alfred Morley in aftertimes that she never dreamed less in her life than she did that night. After, as it seemed to her, a good night's sleep, she was awakened by what she thought was morning. But it was not morning at all. It was the light of a lantern on her face, held by a man with a black mask on, and two others behind him.

"Miss Turner," said this man, "we must trouble you to get up. If you speak we shall use violence."

"How on earth did they get in?" thought Rebecca. "This is your burglary, is it? *I'll* manage *your* business," she added to herself. "Mr. Philpott, you have no possible business in a lady's bedroom. If you only came after your own forgeries we should not care; but there are others. If you will retire I will go to my father, and *your* rascalities shall be put into your own hand."

Young Philpott took the key from the door without one solitary word and locked the door on the outside. The instant he did so Rebecca was out of bed. She wrapped herself in her dressing-gown, and pulling her bed aside, unlocked and unbolted the door, ran barefooted to the rope of the bell which hung in the turret.

Philpott heard the door unlocked, and ran in. But he was too late; the pluck and nerve of that solitary and defenseless girl had beaten his well-laid plot. The girl who was to have been intimidated, and held as hostage until the necessary papers were got from her father, had passed through their net. Instead of cowering among them in terror, she was pulling resolutely at a rope, and sending forth upon the night air clang, clang, clang, in a terrible staccato, which in old times would have brought thirty thousand men out of St. Antoine, and even now would people it with ghosts, if there were a St. Antoine—a tocsin which promised to rouse Walham Green, if not St. Antoine.

Her enemies were utterly beaten. Philpott (no fool) was prepared for both pluck and obstinacy; for such rapidly acting dexterity he was not prepared. The girl's brains were keener than his. He was unused to crime, and accustomed to music. When he heard his burglary proclaimed at midnight in an amorphous staccato (I am sorry to use bad language), he fled. When he thought of the courage and dexterity through which Rebecca had outwitted him, he fled faster for mere shame. The bell, disused and dumb for twenty years, went on clang, clang, clang, clang, proclaiming him to the world as a ruined gamester, who had staked all to keep his wife's respect, and had lost. The poor fellow fled away.

Lost through the courage and dexterity of an idle girl, who was going to be married to a Methodist parson—if he came back; but who had had messages from the sea which gave her sailor's courage, and sailor's recklessness. And she still went on ringing that horrible bell. And if he had gone back and cut her throat it would have been much the same. He had met with a nature more powerful than his own. He was beaten. His wife must know all now, and he was desperate, for he, potential felon as he was, did not trust her.

One hardly knows sometimes whether Providence is kind or unkind. In the end, it seems to me (and to others) that Providence always acts for the best. When you come to mere details, any one can say Providence should have done otherwise. One would say to those who question the government of this world that you

must *wait*. One would say to them, *par exemple*, was not the 2d December the seal of Democracy, not of wax, but of iron?

I have only a very poor little illustration to offer for my pretentious theory. It gets infinitesimally small as one looks at it. Still, granting that the little dog Mab was not brought into the world for nothing, you must grant this.

When Rebecca began clanging the bell Mab began to bark, and aroused Mr. Turner, who put on his trowsers, and got hold of his pistol. Coming out he met young Philpott in a mask, but knew him, and challenged him by name, holding his pistol toward him. Philpott, in his desperation, fired at him and wounded him, and Mr. Turner fell at the head of the stairs.

The whole district was gathered round now. Akin and Spicer were in and had Philpott and his accomplices in hand very quickly. Turner only said, "Let them go before the police come, and stop that bell. Where is Rebecca?"

Akin, the dextrous, assisted by Spicer, carried the captured men through Rebecca's bedroom to get down the back-stairs. On their way they came on Rebecca ringing away as hard as ever.

"For Heaven's sake, Miss, stop that noise," said Akin; "the parish engine's in the lane. Let us get these folks out this way. Is there any road this way?"

There was, it seemed, and Philpott and his friends were got out. There was nothing saved from the bankruptcy save his wife's fortune, and she knows nothing of his midnight meeting with Rebecca. To pleasanter matters.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

TURNER SNUFFS THE SEA WIND.

The neighborhood was aroused, and there were six engines in the lane. The parish engine, anxious to assert itself against the office engines, played upon the house for a little time, and then stopped and driveled into imbecility. The other engines went home smoking pipes, and wondering why they had been sent for when there was no fire. The policeman had come to see what was the matter, and had been promptly turned out by Rebecca. The lane had gone to bed, on the theory that Mr. Turner had been took by his conscience in the night, and had rung the bell for prayers. There were more unconscious lies told that night than there are twice a year, and in the midst of it all Mr. Turner lay, severely wounded through the deltoid, and Rebecca minding him.

She had got singularly emphatic all of a sudden.

"Pa, you don't want a doctor from here?"

"No. All this must be kept quiet."

"You will die if you don't have one. Will you let me move you to Limehouse?"

"That is the best," he said, "good girl. We must take the safe."

"Lor bless you, yes, dear pa. We will take *that* fast enough. Bother the safe, I wish it was chucked in the water. You will have to move in an hour, pa."

"I wish I was well out of it," said he, "with the safe."

"You will be well out of it directly," she said. "Keep quiet."

She ran down to livery stables near by, and ordered a fly, to take her father away in half an hour's time. It was there punctually, and she hurried him in.

She had tied every thing she could find tight round his deltoid, and it is not a very difficult wound to stanch. He was very quiet, in that lethargic state which comes from loss of blood, and he cared nothing about any thing.

She looked back on the old house until they turned the lane. And she said, "There is an end of *that*, thank Heaven." He did not care at all. "Where are you taking me?" he said once.

"Limehouse," she answered. "9 Pilots Wharf. Keep quiet, or the hemorrhage will come on again."

"Where is Morley?" he asked, as they were going along Bird Cage Walk.

"At sea," she said. "Keep quiet. Every thing depends on your keeping absolutely quiet and trusting implicitly to me. Your wound is a severe one, and will be shortly followed by fever. You must be perfectly quiet."

When they were passing Tower Hill he said, "You are a brave, good girl, Rebecca. Where did you get your courage?"

"From Hetty," said Rebecca.

"Where did you see her, then?" said Mr. Turner.

"*I* have never seen her," said Rebecca, "and I don't suppose I ever shall. But she is Alfred's daughter. And I have made a daughter for Alfred who I suppose does not exist at all."

"Talk to me, darling," said Turner. "My own Rebecca, talk to me, for my wound is aching, and I am going to die. Let me hear you talk. What do you conceive about this Hetty?"

"Give me your wounded arm, father, and put it over my breast; lay your head on my breast; and if you keep quite quiet I will tell you what I have imagined Hetty to be. If I am wrong, do not undeceive me.

"Hetty had no mother. Some girls have none. I had none.

"Hetty was a radical and a dissenter in her heart. For no person is a radical or a dissenter except from sentiment."

The wounded man said, "Radicals and dissenters form their opinion on pure reason."

"Hold your tongue, pa, or I will knock you. Hetty found herself, as a radical and a dissenter, bound hand and foot, by radical and dissenting hay-bands. And she broke them."

"And we all wished she had been at the bottom of Jordan when she did so," said the wounded man.

"But she was right in what she did, pa."

"No she wasn't," said he. "She is one of the most thundering fools on the face of the earth. I never heard of the girl doing any good that a coster-monger's wife could not have done. She has smashed her father's connection in our sect, and forced him abroad, for which you have to thank her; because I am going to die, and you will be all alone until he comes back."

"But she is good," said Rebecca.

"Many fools are," was the only reply she got.

Hetty had been tried as a subject of conversation, and had utterly failed. Their silence toward

one another was barely become oppressive, when they were at Morley's house.

Very few words were necessary from Rebecca to tell her story. They were at home at once. Mr. Morley's landlady was easily aroused, and it was bright summer morning, with the river gayly dancing on among the ships toward the sea, when Mr. Turner stepped out of his carriage and looked about him.

"Hush!" he said. "It is good for us to be here. What a lovely place to die in!"

"To get well in, I think you mean, father," said Rebecca.

"No I don't," said he. "There is but little business left me to do. That done I will go to sleep. I am sick of it all."

CHAPTER XXIX.

PILOT TERRACE.

A TIME now came which Rebecca has separated from all times in her life. Such a time may come again, she says, but it has not yet.

Ceaseless activity and care, ceaseless employment, ceaseless anxiety, ceaseless thought for others. A strange mixture of melancholy waiting for death and for life.

And all about and around, golden summer weather, bright water, moving ships, distant Kentish hill-sides basking in the sun. The tomb at Walham Green had given up the soul so long imprisoned there, and it had escaped not to useless idleness, but to anxious usefulness.

"As I saw him fading away, day after day, before my eyes, I loved him more and more, but, believing that he was going to his God, I do not think I was unhappy. I do not think I could be unhappy under any circumstances at Pilot Terrace."

The girl was not talking nonsense when she said this. Inbred in her nature was a love for brightness and motion, without which she was petulant and miserable. Hereditary proclivities are one of the few things which are absolutely certain; in the greatest number of instances the sire sets his seal upon the race, but in the case of a very strong will in the mother she may compete with her mate in the formation of characteristics. Rebecca's mother, coming of a stock which had been used to light gayety and music for centuries, had left this want with Rebecca as her legacy—the fortune on which she was to exist in the horrible prison at Walham Green. In addition to this precious legacy of her mother's, she had got from her father not only the virtue, determination, but the vice, obstinacy (as Carry well knew). And, furthermore, in addition to it all she had got—*God* knows where, I do not—some bright, clear spark of the divine nature, which made her very errors and indiscretions lovely.

Poor child. What if she ran away to Ramsgate, thereby violating a law never mentioned so far south as, and of course never dreamed of in, Philistia: she was very sorry afterward, and she took her most discreet and excellently beloved old nurse. Poor old Rebecca, when she found her duty ready to her hand she did it. Have we all done so?

She wanted light and beauty. She had seen dimly in old time the Popish worship with her mother; and up to the time when she had run away to Ramsgate and seen the sea, that was the only beautiful thing she had seen. There was movement, light, brightness of color: the tinsel is as good as the gold to a child. She had dimly recollected it, in the long hours of Puritan seclusion at Walham Green. How long, oh my Puritan brothers, will you make religion hideous to one-half at least of your children? Think, in these days, when the nation is becoming educated to a rough love of light and beauty, what mischief you are doing, not to us, but to yourselves.

Rebecca says that the first pretty thing she saw when she was grown up was young Hartop the sailor. She always declares to Hetty that she was desperately in love with Hartop for a week, and that he used her disgracefully. However, Rebecca was worthy of seeing something more than a pretty sailor. She was capable of understanding real beauty, of the very highest form.

Mr. Morley. I would have made Mr. Morley a duke if I could, only for the simple fact that he was a dissenting minister, and considered unsound and unsafe even in that capacity. How many times that brown sailor-like face, that grizzled hair, and those steady brown eyes had passed before Rebecca's retina, before they were fixed on it forever, I do not know. But they were fixed there firmly enough now.

He was the first man, practically, who had ever introduced her to real light and beauty. She might have loved Hartop, but Hartop was for Hetty; and with her keen intellect she quickly found out this. That Hartop, brave, glorious, beautiful, was not so brave or so glorious as brown-faced Mr. Morley, with the slightly grizzled hair. "I would not change with Hetty," she said.

However, he was at sea, and she was all alone, and her father was dying, and she declares that she was not unhappy at this gaunt time, which lasted long. And that makes my explanatory sorites quite good enough for a well-told story.

She did well in every detail now. Quick, keen wits, once roused by love, seem to do without experience almost magically. The higher nature seems to descend to the level of the lower, intellect is assisted by instinct, Cupido by Eros. (A thinking friend of the writer says that I am utterly wrong, and that the love of the child for the parent is reflected. I give him this opportunity of adding to the amount of human knowledge.) Love and sympathy supplied experience. If all Sisters and trained nurses had had a conference with Gamp and Prig, they could have done no more for Mr. Turner than Rebecca did, with slight hints about details to the landlady.

I resume my story. She put his bed in the bow-window so that he could see the river and the ships. The landlady saw after him while Rebecca went out in the early morning until she could find a doctor. There were a dozen doctors close by, and the landlady recommended her to one, and Rebecca knocked him up.

He put a head out of window, and said:

"What do you want?"

And Rebecca said, "*He* won't do. Pa would never stand him."

Then she was going to pull at the bell of the

next doctor's, when the door was suddenly opened, and a fat gentleman of fifty said to her, "The advertisement said four o'clock, and it is half past. Come in." Whereupon she marched off; and thought, "You won't do, my gentleman."

"Bother the doctors," she said. "I wish—I beg your pardon, Sir," for she had run up against a queer little man with one leg shorter than the other, coming round a corner.

"Go away from me," he said, waving her off, "you most ridiculous and incautious young woman. I am one saturation of scarlet-fever from head to foot. I have been attending a scarlet-fever case, and I have pulled my pretty ones through. There are between eighty and ninety thousand sporicles on your fine velvet cloak at this moment; chuck it over your little sister's bed to keep her warm, and then say it was me."

"*You* will do," said Rebecca, emphatically.

"Well, I suppose so," said the little gentleman; "what do you want?"

"Pistol wound."

"My Heavens!" he said, turning his queer shrewd little face up to hers.

"Sir," she answered.

"Ho!" he said. "Ha! aristocratic, or long shore?"

"Neither. But mysterious."

"Young man dead?"

"No, but faint," said Rebecca.

"Ha! I'll get these fever clothes off and come directly. What is the house?"

"9 Pilot Terrace."

"Morley's? Yes, quite so. You are Miss Turner. I warned Morley that he was flying his kite too high. I told him that there would be bloodshed if he sought a wife among the Aristocrats. And my words have come true, you see. Well, you are a wise young lady in choosing him. I am a Romanist myself: Doctor Slop, you know; hey? Don't know your secret; of course not. I knew they would shoot some one over you."

"This has nothing to do with me," said Rebecca.

"Of course not," said Dr. Barnham. "Lord bless you, *we* know. Of course not. Bless you! call us Jesuits at one moment, and deny us common knowledge of the world at another. I'll change my fever clothes and come in."

The whole story of Mr. Turner's pistol wound was carefully explained to Dr. Barnham by at least three people; but he never believed it. He only said, "Yes! yes! quite so. We are men of the world, we Catholics."

But Barnham was a great acquisition to them. He treated Mr. Turner with great skill and *bonhomie;* and Mr. Turner loved him and waited for his coming. Both men were intensely in earnest; Barnham a violent ultramontane, Turner a violent Protestant. They used to argue furiously; the Bishop of Rome was alternately the old man of Rome on Mr. Turner's side, and something which one does not care to write about another human being on Dr. Barnham's. These two gentlemen used mutually to assure one another of the utter impossibility of the other's ultimate salvation, in a way which I dare not produce, not believing that God's mercy depends on a few details, as these men did. But they liked one another the better for all their quarreling: and this quaint little Romanist was one of the brightest things in their new short life.

Turner would be in the bay-window, looking at the ships going to and fro, and would invent arguments against the doctor. And he would say to Rebecca, "Come, old girl, give a hand next time, and we will smash him, and put an end to him."

And Rebecca would laugh, and cower down by her father, and say, "I won't say one word against him. And you know that you love him in your heart."

He was indeed the only educated friend they had. Mr. Turner was quietly falling away day after day, and finding his time getting short, he wrote notes to several people calling on them to come.

Lord Ducetoy was the first. "How de do, my lord?" said Turner. "I have summoned up the phantom."

CHAPTER XXX.

LORD DUCETOY'S PROPOSALS.

Here first she began to learn the artistic value and beauty of tones, crossed indefinitely by other tones, perfectly harmonious, and sometimes without incident. At times of the night when the tide was even brimming full, and she was watching, she would open the window, and hear the sounds of the river, all melted into one, and assisted by the dull under-tone of the city. At first, in her ignorance and her cockneyishness, she had thought that the city was the sea; and that the eternal crawling hum, waxing and waning in the night, was the crawling of the breakers upon the shore; but Lord Ducetoy, standing in the balcony with her one evening, laughed at her for thinking so, and pointed out her mistake.

"But water runs down hill, my lord; and the water is running that way."

"My fair cockney cousin, do you not notice that it runs the other way sometimes?"

Yes, it was so. Her beloved sea was further off than she thought, and it was silent to her. He was right. She had mistaken the music of the hated city for the dim, far-heard melody of the free sea.

"Do you ever sail upon the sea, my lord?" she said.

"Not at present, my lady," he answered. "Your good father has given me the means of keeping a yacht, and when the king has his own again perhaps you will sail with me. Have you heard from Mr. Morley?"

"Not one word. Nor from Hartop or Hetty, either. I am all alone, with my father."

"Except for me," he said.

"Except for you," she answered, looking straight at him; "exactly. It is very kind of you to come here and see us."

"Now, Rebecca, I want to have a serious talk with you. I shall offend you deeply, I know; but a man must speak what is in him, or—"

"Hold his tongue."

"Exactly. I am not going to hold mine. Rebecca, do you know that I love you heartily?"

"I thought you did, and I am very glad. I suppose there is not the wildest chance of my ever seeing Lady Ducetoy?"

"Not if you go to the South Sea Islands. But, Rebecca, do you love me?"

"Very much indeed."

Dead stop. Rebecca had some dim idea that he was going to make a fool of himself; and *she* was not going to help him.

"I suppose," he said, in a very awkward manner, "that no one was ever placed in a more difficult position than I am at this present moment."

Rebecca merely stood and looked at him.

"You see, I don't know how to begin."

"Well, then, don't begin," said Rebecca. "No one wants you to."

"Yes, but you don't know. I have a great personal admiration for you, and I am your cousin, and I think you an uncommonly gentlemanly old fellow, one of the most splendid creatures, and one of the most admirably formed ladies I have ever met. Now, cousin Rebecca, I am under terribly great obligations to you for your gallantry. I don't know what your father has done for me, or how his affairs are. Tell me one thing; what money shall you have when you marry Mr. Morley?"

Rebecca gave a gasp of relief; she was afraid that he was going to talk some sentimental nonsense. "I don't suppose we shall have any," she said. "Hagbut has drained away pa's cash for Carry's settlements. I should have liked to take him money, and yet I shouldn't."

"I don't understand," said Lord Ducetoy.

"Can't you see that, cousin? I should like to take him money, because I should like him to have money for his works and his charities, for which he lives. Yet I should also like to go to him, cousin, saying, 'You chose me, and here I am, without one penny. Will you take me still?' And he would. And he would love me better without the money than with it. For if I had all Carry's money it would only be a cloud between us. He, the noblest man in all the world, has honored poor little me, with all my indiscretions and errors, above all women in the world. And I would sooner go to him *in formâ pauperis*. You are talking to an attorney's daughter, you know."

"But Rebecca, do you mean to say that you would sooner marry a mere dissenting clergyman without money than with? It is totally incredible to me why you should marry him at all: but without the power over him which money could give. Are you mad?"

"Not in the least. When you find in your order as fine a gentleman as Alfred Morley I shall be glad to hear from you."

"He must be an exception."

"Of course he is," said she. "There is another exception coming to plague pa. Stay and see the other exception, and finish what you were going to say."

"Well, Rebecca, I only wanted to know this. If money should run short with you, will you accept some from me?"

"Certainly," said Rebecca. "I am very much obliged to you. Some of your money may come in very useful, if pa has been drawn dry by *him*, and if we have not got any of it. We should be very glad of some of yours under those circumstances."

"A few thousands," began Lord Ducetoy.

"Thousands!" said Rebecca, laughing. "If you can find us £150 some day, it is quite as much as we are fit to be trusted with. Don't give Alfred Morley more. He would only give it away. Tell me. Is this offer of money all you were going to say to me when you began?"

"It was all, indeed."

"Bless me, I thought you were going to talk nonsense to me. You were not, were you?"

"I assure you, Rebecca, that I had not the least intention of doing so."

"Quite sure?"

"I am not quite sure that you are sane in dreaming of such a thing. Come, you are the very last person on the face of the earth that I would dare to talk nonsense to. How Mr. Morley got into his present position with you I don't know. I would not have dared to say as much as he has dared. Cousin, I only wanted to try and help you, and you are so very quaint and *emportée* that I had to beat about the bush. I was a little in love with you once, but I have quite got over any little sentimental feeling of that sort."

They had come into the upper room out of the balcony as he said this, and she said, "Bend down your head, my lord." And he bent it down to her and she kissed him, saying, "You are a good man, cousin, and we understand one another."

And if any one thinks she was wrong, I happen to disagree with them.

Since Eve kissed her first-born (unfortunately for the illustration, *Cain*, I believe, unless some new state papers have been grubbed out at Fetter Lane or Simancas to the contrary) no purer kiss was given or received than Rebecca gave to Lord Ducetoy. And he, being a gentleman, knew it.

"Now let us come down stairs," she said. "You have spoken of Mr. Morley as a dissenting minister. As if they were all alike. As if you Nobles were all alike." And she gave illustrations. "Come and see what I have escaped, will you?"

CHAPTER XXXI.

BREAKING WINDOWS.

Why do people break windows? Some do it to get locked up; but I do not mean them. Why do people who do not want to be locked up at all habitually break windows? Who breaks windows? Every one. You, and I, and Rebecca. You and I are wise people, and hold our hands from a window, unless we can get something by breaking it. Now Rebecca was a fool, and never could keep her hands off a window. Morley said she was nearly as bad as Hetty.

There is something very exasperating to a certain kind of mind in a smooth square of plate-glass. One does not demand much, one only demands what nature will give, at any point, at any time of the year. Half and quarter tints, melting into one another, yet making a great harmony, and an "arrangement," as great as Turner's Heidelberg. That was all Rebecca wanted, though she had never seen it, and could not tell you exactly what she did want. She knew, however, that plate-glass with gas behind it exasperated her. So she was given to window breaking.

One says she had never learned the subtle, in-

terminable delight and beauty of half tints. It is not true. She had learned it from Mr. Morley's grizzled head and brown face. And now she came down stairs with Lord Ducetoy of the prairies, thinking about Morley of the sea: of men with an inconceivable number of half and quarter loves about them: and she found Hagbut and Carry; plate-glass and gas. A window, a bald, shallow window. She instantaneously broke it, with the first stone she could find—and you can generally find a stone if you stoop down.

It was very naughty of her. I offer no defense. I am not bound to carry a heroine through every thing. Still Hagbut and Carry, sitting in a row, drinking tea and smiling, were not calculated to make any one the less petulant.

"Where have you been, Rebecca?" said her father.

"Up stairs, with Lord Ducetoy."

"Did you hear Mr. Hagbut come in?"

"Yes, I heard him."

"Where were you?"

"In the upper passage, kissing Lord Ducetoy."

"Becky, old girl," said Mr. Turner. "Don't say such things."

"Why not? You ought to tell the truth, ought you not? And I *was* kissing Lord Ducetoy on the stairs."

Hagbut said, very quietly, "For my part, not being a gentleman myself, I am uneasy in the company of even an ordinary gentleman, still more so in the company of a nobleman. However, by your confession of having kissed his lordship on the stairs, my elephantine awkwardness is somewhat easier to bear. About the outrageous impropriety of the thing happening at all, and of Rebecca telling about it afterward, I say nothing. But from all I can hear, two very good people have kissed one another, and are not ashamed of it either."

Lord Ducetoy laughed aloud. "It was *her*, you know, Padre, mind that. *She* kissed *me* in the passage. You believe me, I am sure."

"My lord, I am bound to believe the statement of any hereditary legislator, the more particularly in this case because I am perfectly certain that you would never have obtained the favor on your own account."

Carry sat utterly aghast. Lord Ducetoy had kissed Becky in the passage, and they were all making fun of it. Her husband was laughing, and Becky and Lord Ducetoy were smiling. *She* began to cry.

Hagbut did not attend to her at first, for his eyes were fixed on Mr. Turner. He turned suddenly on Carry and ordered her to run for the doctor.

"Rebecca, look at your father," he said. "Good heavens and earth! it can't be so, while we have been chattering nonsense here. Go away, Rebecca, go and fetch the landlady, or the surgeon, or the fire-engine, or some one. My lord, things have gone wrong here. Are you afraid of death?"

"Is he dead?" said Lord Ducetoy.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE GREAT HETTY MYSTERY CLEARED UP.

Poor old Turner. He was dead enough. The life, fierce at first in its vitality, nay, some said wild, had come to an almost eventless end. He had died in his chair quite quietly. A nobleman and a dissenting minister were carrying his body to a sofa, and a scared, beautiful daughter, looking on death now for the first time, was holding the candle. That was the end and finish of it all.

"Worth?" Yes. "Silence?" Beyond that of most. "Ambition?" Yes. "Money?" Enough. "Love?" Ay, and hate too. We shall never know *that* story. "Respect in the world?" More than most. "Capabilities of enjoyment?" Very great, but never exercised. "Religion?" That is no matter here, just now, when Ducetoy the Puseyite and Hagbut the Dissenter are carrying him to the sofa. One of his shoes fell off, and Rebecca picked it up and tried to put it on.

"It is of no use to do that," said Lord Ducetoy.

No use to put on his shoe. Not one bit. There had come an end and finish. The man, as known to sight and touch, was utterly gone, with all his works and ways, bearing the consequences with him. The very tree in front of the house would last longer than he. A few days and the very image must be hidden in the earth. Shall we ever dare to appreciate the memory of death? Shall we ever dare to deduce the great future of the soul from the contempt which our good God shows toward this poor pretty toy of a body which he has lent us?

He was *dead*. Shut your eyes for only one minute, and think of it. At one time all a man's schemes and plots, honorable and other, must come to an end! The man, as you knew him, must be quickly put out of the way and hidden; the man exists no more. Who can wonder at Religion being the one thing which people are most furious about? That terror of utter annihilation which produced the slightly illogical Phœdo, is the basis of all religions. There is only one tribe in the world, so far as I know, who disbelieve in a future state, and it would be unpolite to name them.

However, Turner, with all his sins and virtues, was, to his scared daughter, no more than a heap of bones and flesh. No wrong which one had ever done the other could be righted *now*. It was all over. She had no means of believing that they would ever meet again. Her religion denied her the shocking and yet beautifully tender superstition of masses for his soul; she had been trained in too sharp a school to believe that Divine mercy could be bought with music and candles. She only thought that her father had done his best, and that God would have mercy on him. In her terror, in her dumb, stunned grief, she would have asked even Hagbut about her father's future; but his people had told her so many cruel things that she feared he might say that her father was in hell, and she also very much feared that she should believe it; and so she merely hung round his body tenderly, without one solitary tear as yet, and moaned to herself, "Alfred! Alfred!"

But Morley was far away on the wild sea.

There was no hope from him; and it was no use lying on the floor beside the corpse, which was on the sofa, and saying at intervals, in a whisper, ghostly from want of hope, "Pa!" That was obviously no good whatever. All kinds of methods have been tried for speaking with the dead, but I have never heard of one which has succeeded.

Moaning inarticulately with all the weight of what might have been between her and that poor corpse, weighing on her more and more as the minutes went on, she lay dumb and tearless. Lord Ducetoy and Mr. Hagbut, with that delicacy of manhood, which is nearly as fine as that of womanhood, left her alone, and staid about the house whispering. Carry had been hurried out of the house (being in an interesting condition), not having the least idea that her father was dead. What to do with the moaning tearless Rebecca was becoming a puzzle to Lord Ducetoy. Hagbut was perfectly calm, and only said, "Wait, my lord. She will have faces round her soon which she will know. I was to preach here to-night, and I have ordered some women of my communion, who are come to hear me, to come to her."

Rebecca had nearly moaned herself to sleep on the hard floor, when she felt a kind, gentle arm round her waist, and heard a very gentle voice say, "My love, come with me. Get up."

"I will be very obedient," said Rebecca. "I was wrong to go to Ramsgate. Now that death is here, I know it. Alfred Morley has forgiven me, and pa forgave me too. I will go to Walham Green, and ask forgiveness of all. I am sure even Miss Soper would forgive me now."

"My sweet child, my own bonny girl," said old Soper; "what have *I* to forgive? You have got to forgive an ill-tempered old maid, driven wild by girls. Come away, dear, and scold me. See here is Mrs. Russel; you will come with us, won't you?"

"Pretty sweet-heart," said Mrs. Russel; "come with us. We never hit it off together yet, but we will do so for the future. Becky, my pretty love, come and lie down."

All the well-written, or well-talked sentimentality in the world could never have had the effect which the kindness of these two old women had on Rebecca. The rock was smitten, and the tears came forth.

Soper and Russel behaved gloriously. Soper never yielded an inch in her principles. Rebecca had once done a thing which, if done too often, would entirely ruin the ladies' school business, for which Soper had a sentimental regard, seeing that she had made a modest competence out of it. About the Ramsgate business Soper nailed her colors to the mast; but on all other points she gave way, and turned out the thoroughly good fellow which she really was. Russel and she staid in the house until the end, and as they never got on from one week's end to another without a squabble, they naturally had one here.

Russel said one evening at tea that Rebecca would be all alone now. Mr. Hagbut was not likely to let Carry see much of her, and she would be alone.

"A good job too," said Soper. "I hate Carry."

"She is a well-conducted girl," said Russel.

"Her sister is worth ten of her," said Soper, the experienced. "Don't talk nonsense. If Rebecca was a barrack-master's daughter (you don't know what that means, I suppose?) there would never be a scandal about her."

Russel was so used to getting her old ears boxed by Soper that she submitted as usual, and said, "You know best, my dear, of course. That Morley's daughter, that Hetty, will be home soon, and she will be thrown against Rebecca. I suppose you will be saying next that you approve of *that*."

"Yes, I shall," said Soper. "I have retired from business, and sold my connection. I'll say *that*. There are girls and girls, and we in our trade don't study that enough. Yes, I'll say *that*," said Soper, rubbing her nose. "I don't want to injure the woman's business who bought my school; but I will say as much as *that*."

"Don't be angry, my dear," said Russel.

"I shall, if I choose. Morley's daughter is the best companion for Morley's wife."

"After what she has done?" cried Russel.

"What *has* she done?" asked Soper.

"Outraged every law of respectability," said Mrs. Russel, stoutly. "O Lord! look there."

It was only Rebecca in her dressing-gown, looking certainly very ghostly.

"My dear friends," she said, "is there any thing wrong?"

"Yes," said Russel; "Miss Soper is backing up Hetty."

"And I don't see why I should not," said Soper; "the girl was plagued out of her life, and rebelled. Morley had not any money to give her, and she went honestly and bravely away to get money to keep herself and to help him. And she went as stewardess on board a Scotch steamer; and she went as stewardess on board an American steamer; and she got money; and she got prestige for business habits; and she prospered. She is a noble soul, that is about what she is, and those who decry her are fools."

"Fool is a strong word," said Mrs. Russel. "Come, tell the whole truth."

"About her shipwrecks? About her heroism?"

"You know what I mean," said Russel.

"About the *Lord Clyde?* Yes, I will tell Becky about that. Now, my dear, you shall have the very whole of it. Hetty, long a disgrace to our respectable connection, in consequence of her—a minister's daughter—lowering herself so far as to go to sea as a stewardess. In our connection, my dear, as in some others, we never lower ourselves so far as to marry into the ministry. Mr. Spurgeon pointed out that last week. But we expect our ministers' daughters to keep their rank. Hetty Morley violated our traditions, and did worse."

"I am sure she did no wrong," said Rebecca.

"Oh, didn't she?" said Soper, now venomous. "If there was a Northern sympathizer in this world it was Alfred Morley. If any sect in Catholic Europe was more united than ours on the subject of hatred to the slave-owners of the South it was ours. Hartop, the man to whom she was engaged, was an open favorer of the Northern States. What did Hetty do? Flew in the face of her father, her lover, and her connection, and run the blockade into Charleston."

"Is *that* all she has done?" asked Rebecca.

"Enough, too," said Soper, now very angry

indeed. "Disgraced herself by taking service as a stewardess; and then, on sentimental grounds, assisting Jezebels of slavery into that strong-hold of abomination, Charleston."

I believe that it was the late great and good President Lincoln who first said that you could do nothing with a woman when her back was up. You could do nothing with Soper now. Her major premiss was "Humbug," and she never got to her minor, and dropped grammar in her fury.

"That *Lord Clyde*," she said, "was took for blockade running. And Hetty Morley was stewardess aboard of her, in the Clyde. And there comes two ladies, one big with child. And they says mutually about one another: 'My husband's killed,' one on 'em says; 'and hers,' pointing to the one in the family-way, 'he is wounded.' 'Do you know the danger?' says the skipper. 'I am uncommon deep this time, and they have built a gun-boat to catch me: and I doubt I can't take ladies.'"

"Stop your story, Miss Soper," said Mrs. Russel. "It's too much for her."

Rebecca, perfectly white, and a little wild, was staring at Miss Soper. The experienced Soper looked at her one instant and went on.

"It won't hurt you to tell. It will draw your mind from what is up stairs. The skipper said, 'I can't take ladies.' They says, 'But us. Think on us,' they said. 'For the memory of your mother take us.' And the one whose husband was alive said, 'She can't see him again, but I may see my man.' And the skipper said, 'You two will never get through without some other women. I expect to be took this time. And our stewardess is ordered not to go. I won't trust myself with you without her.' And he asked Hetty: and Hetty said 'Willing.' And she went; and all I say is, that God went with her. That is what Hetty did."

"Did the two slave-owning ladies get safe in?" asked Rebecca.

"Yes," said the violent emancipationist Soper, triumphantly; "they did, thank God."

"Thank God, also," said Rebecca. "Tell us the rest of what Hetty did."

"Not much," said Soper, "except behaving like an Englishwoman. The *Lord Clyde* was deep, and touched the ground under a battery, and she was wounded in the face by the splinter of a shell; but she stood to her work plucky until the very last."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

WAITING BY THE TIDE.

The little tale is nearly told. A little more trouble. A little more heart gnawing, weary waiting, and our bold wild hawk will have been purged from the fault, mainly brought on her by her old unsuitable life, and our once wild peregrine shall be tamed. She shall stoop to the master's wrist directly; no lure needed any longer. No need for jesses, hood, or bell; she shall perch upon his wrist, I promise you, and then she shall spread her pretty wings and fly away across the sea toward the morning.

I tried hard to make you like her from the very first; but she was a naughty girl, I doubt. Yet love had done for her what law never did, and she was good enough now, poor child, left all alone.

All alone! Why, no. She could never be alone any more now. Her soul had been awakened in the light of a new dawn, to which the flaming primrose of Australian morning is but darkness. The sentimental love and admiration for one grayish-headed man, now alone upon the broad weltering sea, a love which, fed on absence, had wrought such a change in her that she found her body transformed into a temple of new hopes and fears, new sympathies and anxieties. She was *living*, so she could never be alone.

She had money now, nearly £4000. Mr. Hagbut, as one of her father's executors, had done better by her than he was absolutely warranted by law: of that she never knew. "How on earth," said Lord Ducetoy to her once, "do you manage to get eight per cent. for your money? I can't." *Hagbut* knew. That frank, Americanized young nobleman consulted her often on business matters relating to his approaching marriage, declaring that he was certain that her father's genius for business must have descended on her. The most he made by it, however, was being loosed of £20 for the Sailors' Orphans' Home.

For she was waiting by the tide for her man at sea who came not, and sent no message or sign. Her life was the life of the sea-folks now. The good Tibbeys from Chelsea had more than once come to see her, and had begged her to come to them; but her answer was always the same: "That life is dead and past. I am waiting by the tide, my dears, for him who is at sea. I will never go westward again into that wilderness. I wait upon the shore for him, and I think he will come back to me. If he does not, I will wait still."

Carry and Mrs. Russel said that poor Rebecca was moping herself to death all alone down at Limehouse. Now, on the other hand, Miss Soper, whose father was dead, having had a look or two at Limehouse, took apartments there, and, carrying her mother down, established herself; thereby emphatically proving her opinion of the difference between Walham Green and Limehouse. The split between herself and Carry and Russel was complete.

"Rebecca," said the old schoolmistress, "is worth the lot of you put together. The girl is doing hard work and good work, and I have been used to hard work since I was fourteen"—(as, indeed, she had)—"and I am going to do some more of it. Mrs. Russel, it is the want of hard work which has spoiled my temper and yours; and it will spoil yours, too, Mrs. Hagbut." The two saw very little of her after this.

I am not Homer, and so I can not describe the fearful battles which went on between Miss Soper and Doctor Barnham, the Papist. The number of times a day which they announced one another's ultimate destruction was something fearful. But they were excellent good friends, and worked together admirably, in the little sharp attack of cholera in that year; partly, I think, from jealousy, to see who could do most.

So it came to pass that Rebecca saw more of her old enemy than ever she had done before. And when she came to compare Soper's life with her own, she felt herself a very worthless person.

The very first and purest pleasure which Rebecca got, when she had settled down, was a certain school for sailors' children, got together and kept together by a fat old woman, Mrs. Frump. She founded it, she taught it (mainly), she managed it, and she paid for it. *She* was it. Soper grubbed out the story about it; and it was, that her son had gone away, and had been lost in a "cyphoon," leaving her two infant children to educate. And Mrs. Frump had decided that it was best that the children should have company. And so the school had grown from two sailors' orphans to twenty-eight sailors' children, whose fathers might return, or, on the other hand, might not. And it was by the tide-way, and the little ones could see the ships as they passed close by.

It was one of those temporary schools, kept together by the force of character of a single person; and which, when God thinks fit to say to that person, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," break up and go to pieces, and are heard of no more.

Yet their good works live after them. I am not foolish enough, of course, to say for an instant that unorganized schools, dependent on mere individuals, should in any way take the place of organized schools; yet I say thus much about such schools as this, which I have known, that they have impressed a certain die of character on the children taught there, and have deserved well of the state. Nay, more: I believe, that on the last great gathering, when one of the founders and keepers of these schools shall come up for judgment, and the Great One shall say, "Who will speak for this man?" hundreds of white hands will be held up out of the crowd, and their owners will say, "Lord, he showed us the way to thy Son."

Well, that is only my opinion about those schools. We are getting too serious, I fear.

Rebecca watched old Frump as a cat watches a mouse. But she was a determined old girl, our Rebecca, and intended to have her wicked will of Frump. She confronted Frump in the street one day, and asked her if she might come and teach in her school.

Frump eyed her over from top to toe, and said, "Why?"

Rebecca was perfectly ready for her. She told Frump the whole of her story from beginning to end; and, in conclusion, said, pitifully, "Please, let me help."

"Humph!" said Frump; "as a general rule I don't like Dissenters round my place. But you have got the right kind of eye, and I know Morley. You can come, if you like."

"I thank you very much," said Rebecca.

"Are you fond of your tea, child?" asked Frump.

"Yes, I like it *very* much," said Rebecca.

"Then you had better come along and have some of it with me," said Frump.

And at tea Rebecca explained to Frump that her father had been a Dissenter and her mother a Papist. Frump was inclined, on the whole, to look on this in the light of a good cross; not like the orthodox thing certainly, but not so very bad. She cautioned Rebecca carefully about the expression of unorthodox opinions on one side or the other. Rebecca promised strict obedience; and they became good friends.

So she got among the pretty, innocent sailors' children, and loved them, and worked diligently among them, not only for their own sweet sakes, but for the sake of her own dear sailor far away upon the wild sea.

Another thing which raised her soul much in these times was this: the ritualisms of the sect to which she clung were not bald and barren to her here, as they were at Walham Green. She craved for light and music in her ritual; and to some extent she got it here. The light was in the upturned eyes of the little congregation, the music was got by the rushing of the wind and the lapping of the tide outside the chapel.

But there was a great attraction in her chapel just now. A young missionary had come home, having lost his wife in some wild attempt to spread Christianity in some dim spot on the Congr, where the Capuchins and Jesuits had failed 200 years before. A wild young man with a tangled head, blazing black eyes, a bad heart-disease, a precarious income of £58 a year, and what I choose to call a golden faith. This young man had gone through more troubles than St. Paul himself, and had come home to take Morley's duty. Barnham, the Papist, told Miss Soper that that man was a loss to the Catholic Church, for that he preached the Real Presence, as in *his* language he most certainly did. She, Soper, was *furious*, but Dr. Barnham was a great deal too strong for her, Soper not being able from her professions to urge *petitio principii* against him, and leaving him free to argue from their common major.

Frump, however, retired on the lines of Torres Vedras, until the country should be wasted before her. Her lines were, that young Jones, the Dissenting missionary, was a Jesuit in disguise. Which was a safe thing to say.

But in spite of the rather singular things which this tangled-headed young man said about the necessity of baptism, the inconceivable sin of falling away from grace, and the (practically) ultra-Romish views of the communion, Rebecca loved to hear this young man preach. For there was an earnest fury about every word of his which took her heart, and his words carried with them the scent of the distant sea, the waves of which wandered over his dead wife's coffin.

So, busy and active, yet perfectly peaceful, still she waited for Alfred Morley beside the tide.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HETTY AT LAST.

So Rebecca hung on, doing the work which God in his kindness had given her. Waiting by the tide, month after month, for a message from the sea.

When the wind was very wild, and the rain beat upon the glass, she would get up and do as she had now so often seen the sailors' wives do, walk up and down the room with her arms tightly folded; thinking of the man she loved at sea.

It was a very wild fierce night six months after she came there, and was very late. She had not long come in, after making one of some eighty women who had been out in the rain and the wild weather to see an accident. Cap-

tain Moriarty had driven from his moorings in the gale, and caused an alarm as great as if the Houses of Parliament were afire. Rebecca had ended with a hearty laugh when all things were put straight, and had come home to her solitary supper of bread and cheese; and the wind was very wild, and her heart was very heavy, and she ate her supper walking up and down, and, I am very much afraid, crying.

The door was opened, and a voice coming from a figure which she could not see, said, "If you please, Miss, old Job Partridge, of the *Mary Ann*, is much worse, and wants to see you immediate."

"I will be with you directly," said Rebecca; "how far is it?"

"About a mile straight in the teeth of the wind, and it is raining cats, dogs, marlin-spikes, and copper sheathing," said the voice.

"I will be with you in two minutes," said Rebecca. "I have been out and got my hair wet, and have been drying it. Mr. Moriarty has lost his moorings, but he has been brought up by a hawser from the *Elizabeth* now. I will not detain you an instant."

The voice said, in the most emphatic manner, "You will do," and out of the darkness came a young woman shorter than herself, who put her two hands on Rebecca's shoulders, and looked up, and Rebecca knew in an instant that she was looking on a beauty more splendid than her own.

She was perfectly amazed, and stammered out, "Is it, is it—"

"Of course it is, my dear soul."

"Is it *Hetty?*" said Rebecca.

"Of course it is, my dear. Who else did you think it was? Now have a good look at me. Look at me," said Hetty; and Rebecca did so, with fixed eyes and open mouth, for this mysterious long-concealed Hetty was the strangest creature she had ever seen in her life.

She was dressed in close-fitting sailor's blue, and had just taken a sailor's tarpaulin hat off her head, and shaken out her hair; it was a crown of dark chestnut. In features, more particularly in the quaint, beautiful mouth, turned habitually up at the corners, she resembled very closely Sir Joshua's Muscipula; as she shaded her great hazel eyes with her hand, to get a good look at Rebecca, Rebecca saw that she was like her father, but also like some one she had never seen.

Rebecca was dazed and stunned at the apparition. She had loved beauty deeply, and been told that Hetty was beautiful; but she was not prepared for *this*. And where did the girl get that wondrous, tender, pathetic *expression* from, almost as strange as her beauty? Rebecca soon knew whence came that look.

"Rebecca, dear," said Hetty, "God is sending Jack and I a little one. Will you nurse me until it is born, and I am fit to go afloat again?"

That was all she said, and Rebecca said exactly nothing at all; but she laughed such a happy laugh that Hetty laughed again; and kissing her, and shaking the rain-drops from her hair, sat down upon the easy-chair and demanded tea.

The seed-time of Rebecca's life had been hard and bitter, but the harvest was beginning now. Beginning in doubt, trouble, anxiety, but in deep glorious happiness. She was getting a share in the great life which was moving about her. The arrival of this strange, beautiful storm-bird from the wild sea was now, to her, a deeper, more intense pleasure than all the castles, broughams, opera-boxes, and diamonds that any lady ever had in this world.

"I think we shall be very fond of one another," said Hetty.

"That is quite my opinion," said Rebecca. "Where have you been, Hetty?"

"Slopping round," said Hetty. "I am perfectly sick and tired of these clipper ships; and I declare most positively, that when what is going to happen has happened I will never put my kit on board of another. Jack, thank Heaven, has got one of the old sort."

"Has he got a ship?" said Rebecca, eagerly.

"Certainly he has," said Hetty.

"And where is Jack gone?" asked Rebecca.

"Callao, for orders," said Hetty; "that, he says, expresses, in sailors' language, Greek Kalends. Ships cleared for Callao never know where they are going; it may be Melbourne, and it may be Hong-Kong—one as likely as the other. I shall not see him for a year."

"Are you not impatient?" asked Rebecca.

"My good soul, if sailors' wives were to get impatient they would go mad. I have laid my heart and soul at the feet of one sailor, and you have laid yours at the feet of another. Sailors' wives must know how to wait and suffer. And if you have a common religion, if you believe that there is no cloud at death between you and your husband, you can get through any thing. That is the case between Jack and myself."

"Yes," said Rebecca, and there was a great deal in her Yes.

"Now," said Hetty, "I am going to tell you a thing which will make you very angry and make you hate me. Jack has openly joined the Church of England, and I have gone with him."

"Why not, Hetty?" said Rebecca, turning her face to Hetty.

"Why not?" said Hetty. "Why, of all the indiscretions I ever committed, this is the worst. I hope you will not be so foolish as I have been."

"Why not?" said Rebecca.

"Because you would cut the last ground from under my father's feet. Rebecca, you have a noble soul committed to your care, for which you will have to answer at the Day of Judgment. Follow him—do not lead him. A led man is an ill thing. I have been to sea, and I know."

Here there was an interruption: Mrs. Tryon stood at the door.

"Now then, Miss Turner; you are talking her to death. Het, old girl, how are you? You did right to come home to Miss Turner and I, though Miss Turner *is* a fool."

"I have known that for a long time," said Rebecca, quietly; for Mrs. Tryon had called her a fool in a way which did not give offense. There are different ways of calling people fools.

"Where is your man gone?" said Mrs. Tryon to Hetty.

"To Callao for orders," said Hetty.

"He is a fool, and you were a fool for letting him go," said Tryon.

"Don't talk nonsense, my dear soul," said Hetty. "You may think it fine, but we do not."

"Is he going through the Straits or round the Horn?" asked Tryon.

"Round the Horn," said Hetty. "His ship would never beat through the Straits, she is bad

to get about. I did not like his crew myself. Too many Malays. I don't like it altogether, and the ship is, I doubt, wet; and in my opinion, Mrs. Tryon, she is extremely over-sparred. Why, Jack told me himself that she had broke her main-yard lift by sheer rolling, and dropped it on to the slings."

"Those iron lifts are all rubbish," said Mrs. Tryon.

"I know that," said Hetty; "but that does not make amends for Jack's carrying on round the Horn with iron lifts. And his ship's bows are too far aft, so that she don't seem as though she would lift well with a reefed foresail, when she is going before it. As for laying her to in a gale of wind, my dear, if I was on board of her when Jack proposed to do it I should get out and walk."

"Look at her," said Tryon, quietly.

It was Rebecca to whom she called attention. She had gone to sleep on the floor with her head on a hassock. "Pretty sweet," said Tryon. "Have you heard any thing of Morley, dear?"

"Speak very low," said Hetty. "Pa has gone on to Patagonia in the *Eliza*. And the *Sydney Herald* says that they are all dead."

"You don't believe it, dear?" said Mrs. Tryon.

"Of course I don't," said Hetty. "Jack says that he don't believe a *thingamy* of it."

This is the way religious sailors' wives talk confidentially, ladies and gentlemen. Of course they ought not to do so, but they do it.

"I don't believe a solitary word of it," said Tryon. "But that Patagonian coast is a awful bad 'un. Look how sweet she sleeps, pretty love, pretty dear!"

CHAPTER XXXV.

A MESSAGE FROM THE SEA.

There came a long time now while Rebecca and Hetty abode together like Ruth and Naomi. But all danger to Rebecca was over in the presence of a necessity greater than her own. Her own self was dead and ended, and she had three others, Morley, Hetty, and Hartop; not to mention three dozen others in the swarming, seafaring population all around her.

To lose sight of self utterly for one moment is to have lived for one moment.

Rebecca lived much now, for she never had time to think of herself at all. And the very person who took her away from herself most was that bonny, shrewd, beautiful Hetty.

Mrs. Tryon had a fight with Hetty about her treatment of Rebecca; but after a long engagement of an hour Tryon retired, with all her masts shot away (but with her colors flying), leaving Hetty the victor. As I can not, from want of space, give an account of the whole of this great battle, I will give the last part of it; so that *ex pede Herculem*, the reader may judge what the beginning of the fight was like.

"You worry the girl so," said Tryon.

"I want to," said Hetty. "I want to take her out of herself, and make her think of *me*, not of my father."

"Why?"

"Because I am beginning to believe that my father is in heaven," said Hetty. "The Society are getting very anxious."

"But sending her these errands in such weather," said Mrs. Tryon; "you will kill her."

"She is not made of sugar," said Hetty.

Rebecca came in at this moment, and as an illustration of how much Hetty meant to attend to Mrs. Tryon, she said to Rebecca, coolly:

"I want sardines for my supper. I am to have every thing I fancy, and I fancy them. And the sardines at the corner shop are nothing but pilchards, and taste of hair-oil. Go up the street, and get a box of the small ones at Elmses."

And Rebecca went out into the rain again, without one word.

"I call it shameful usage," said Mrs. Tryon.

"It is the system I mean to pursue with her," said Hetty, coolly.

When Rebecca came back with the sardines Hetty called her to her.

"Rebecca, Mrs. Tryon has been saying that if I try you as I do you will lose your love for me. Is that so?"

"She must be perfectly foolish," said Rebecca, sharply. "I wish you would try me more. *You* don't think it, Hetty?"

"Not I. I will tell you the whole truth. If sailors' wives brood and think of nothing but themselves and their husbands they will go mad. Unless you are busy you will never be happy. I have no letter from Jack, from Valparaiso."

"And I have none from Alfred."

"Self again. You should think of me, not of my father. I told you that pa was gone to Patagonia, and you don't suppose that there are letter-boxes there. You should think about *me*."

But Rebecca cried very much indeed, and Hetty let her alone for a little.

"Becky, dear," she said at last, "get me to bed, and send for Doctor Warnford. I am going to be ill." And Rebecca got her to bed and sent for the doctor.

Meanwhile Hetty had leaned her face to the wall, weeping silently. "Father and Jack both together. O God, in thine infinite mercy, judge me not too heavily!"

On the morrow, Hetty, lying in the same bed where Mr. Turner had died, and watching the ships pass up and down the river, lay with a brave boy on her bosom, and was quite quiet and well, saying very little indeed.

Presently came Mrs. Tryon with a piece of news which she imparted to Rebecca. "Jack Hartop has lost his ship."

Rebecca was so puzzled by the news that she found herself wondering whether Jack Hartop had dropped his ship down an area railings, or lost it at cards, or left it accidentally in a railway carriage, or gone on shore forgetfully and let it sail away by itself into unknown seas; when Mrs. Tryon said, sharply:

"You are wool-gathering. Don't do it. He has lost his ship on Cape Northumberland, and his certificate with it."

"It will kill her," said Rebecca.

"Yes, if she is told. But she must not be. *Now* you understand."

"Yes, *I* understand," said Rebecca, and Mrs. Tryon walked out.

It was a long time before Hetty was well

enough to be told any thing about Hartop's mishap. It was a much longer time before Rebecca said one word to her about it.

She did not know what to do. God solved the problem for her ultimately, in this way:

Hetty had got about, on the wharf, and by the river, with her baby, impressing on the newly-formed retina of that young gentleman the images of ships. Otherwise the life went on among the sailors' wives left waiting for some who came back hearty and well; for some who came back broken, though as dear as ever; and for some who never came back at all. It had come on to rain one evening, and Rebecca caught Hetty on the wharf, and pulled her into the house.

"I have news," said Rebecca.

"You need not trouble to say that, Becky," said Hetty. "Is it pa or Jack?"

"Jack," said Rebecca. "He has lost his ship and been court-martialed."

"Then he is not dead?" said Hetty.

"Not he," said Rebecca.

"Has Jack lost his certificate?" asked Hetty.

"No, Hetty. Hetty, be quiet and I will tell you every thing. Hetty, listen, and be quiet."

"I am quite quiet," said Hetty. "If Jack is alive and well, what care I? You say that he has not lost his certificate. If they had dared to take it away I would have tweaked Dr. Deane's nose till they renewed it."

"But I have to read you something," said Rebecca.

"You had better read it then," said Hetty.

Rebecca read, in a very fluttering voice, from a newspaper, *The Melbourne Argus:*

"The Board which sat on Captain Hartop, of the ship *Flying Cloud*, have reported.

"It appears that Captain Hartop was keeping his due course, when, being warned by the sudden fall of the mercury, he made for sea, but in consequence of the calm which preceded the hurricane which has devastated our southern shores, he was unable to get way on his ship. After the cyclone struck her of course there was no possibility of saving her. Up to this point the Board consider that Captain Hartop's conduct was most seamanlike—"

"Thank you for nothing, quoth the gallipot," said Hetty, quietly. "If Jack could not fiddle his ship out of any thing in reason, I should like to see the man who could."

"After the ship struck on the reef under Cape Northumberland, the conduct of Captain Hartop was beyond all praise for which they can find words. His personal prestige among his sailors seems to have been so great that on this terrible night they passed quietly into the boats, in the calmer water in the lee of the reef, without noticing that he himself had remained with his first mate, Green—"

"I shall *not* discharge that young man," said Hetty, with a slight flutter in her voice; "go on, Rebecca. Jack, Jack, you are a sailor!"

"—In order to see whether there was any chance of saving any thing for the underwriters in case of the gale moderating, taking his chance of swimming on shore. The Board wish it to be distinctly understood that their opinion is that during this unhappy wreck, and in the long march between the place of the wreck and the nearest settlement, Captain Hartop conducted himself from first to last like a splendid British sailor."

"Of course Jack did," said Hetty, quietly. "Do not *I* know him? Jack is a man of pluck and energy. Jack is a sailor, every inch of him. I suppose his owners will give him another ship at once, after that report. If they don't, I will spend a little time at their office not very pleasantly for them."

And she looked Rebecca straight in the face as cool as a cucumber. And Rebecca was deeply puzzled.

"Well, and so that is the whole of it, is it?" said Hetty. "I am glad that beast of a ship is at the bottom of the sea without drowning Jack or any of the men. Is there any thing more to tell?"

Rebecca was getting more and more puzzled. "Has she a heart at all?" she said to herself.

"Yes, Hetty," she said; "but I do not know how to tell it. The Panama route—"

There was no need to say more, or to question whether or no Hetty had a heart. The door opened quickly, and in the open doorway stood Jack Hartop.

Hetty stood up and spread out her ten fingers toward him. In less than a second her pretty arms were round his neck, and he was hugging her like a bear. She said, "Love, love, love," and he said, "Darling, darling, darling," which is folly the most incurable. But if you will bring me any gentleman who will affirm on his oath that he has never made a fool of himself to the same extent, I will politely decline that gentleman's acquaintance.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

ANOTHER MESSAGE FROM THE SEA.

The life thus enriched by two whom she loved went smoothly on for Rebecca. Not cheerfully, for there came no word of Mr. Morley at all. Hetty and Hartop spoke continually about him, always pleasantly. When it was hot, Hetty would say, "I doubt he is cold, poor dear, there where he is;" and Hartop would say, "Ay, it is winter there now." At dinner Hetty might say, "I doubt he has no lamb and green peas to-day, poor man;" and Hartop would say, "No, he will be having mainly fish and seal beef for his dinner. It is not bad, but not so good as this."

So they would talk to her, keeping his image perpetually before her mind, they both having given up all hope.

They kept from her the news that the missionary ship had been lost, but that a few of the missionaries were heard to be alive three months after. They kept from her their knowledge of the bitter, hopeless coast of Patagonia, and Hetty had so persistently forced on her the maxim that sailors' wives must not fret, that she believed her, and abode in quiet, busy, and not unhappy, ignorant of the chances of the sea.

But day by day it became evident to her that Jack Hartop was growing to be a person of great consequence among a certain great and powerful society. Her father had belonged to this society, and she had been to a May meeting of it, presided over by a certain great earl; and one day

in these times she found this same earl, whom she knew by sight, talking eagerly and familiarly with Jack Hartop.

She heard him say, "It is certainly a splendid offer—a splendid offer. And as a sailor, Mr. Hartop, you think that the yacht is big enough."

"Bless you, my lord, I would sail her any where! Two hundred and eighty tons!—why, she is a frigate."

"It is somewhat singular that Lord Ducetoy, who is not even a subscriber, and a—"

At this moment Rebecca passed with a slight bow and went on.

"Who is that young lady?" said Lord S.

"Miss Turner."

"Oh; I was saying that it seems singular that a mere sportsman like Lord Ducetoy should interest himself so deeply in a cause like this, as to lend his yacht and her stores, and offer to pay a picked crew out of his own pocket, on condition of your commanding the expedition."

"My lord," said Hartop, "it is easily accounted for. Lord Ducetoy is cousin to Miss Turner, who has just passed, and Lord Ducetoy was under the deepest obligations to her father for saving his property from the Philpott smash."

"But what has Miss Turner to do with it?"

"She is engaged to be married to Morley, and she does not know what you and I do."

"God help her in her grief!" said Lord S., raising his hat solemnly.

"Amen," said Jack Hartop.

"When can you sail?"

"Well, in consequence of this offer of Lord Ducetoy's, I can get to sea in a week. If they are alive, they owe their lives to Lord Ducetoy."

"Under God," said Lord S.

"Under God, I mean," said Jack. "But he has saved us in one way or another two months of valuable time."

"It is really so."

"By-the-by, my lord, Miss Turner is to know nothing of Lord Ducetoy's gift."

"Indeed! Was there ever any tenderness in that quarter?"

"Oh, never, I think. He lost his heart effectually in America, before he ever saw her. But he has a profound admiration for her."

"Is Mrs. Hartop going?" said Lord S.

"Oh yes, my lord, *she* is going. You may be quite certain that she could not keep her hand out of a thing of this kind."

"God go with her!" said Lord S., and so they parted.

"Rebecca," said Hetty to her, next morning, "Jack has got another ship."

"A good one?"

"A *splendid* one. A missionary ship. United Missionary Society. The U. M. S. have picked him out. And I am going too."

"I wish I was," said Rebecca; "but I am so glad for Jack. I can not go, for Alfred might come while I was away, and would be very sorry to miss me."

Hetty went quietly out of the room, humming a tune, as if to fetch something, went up stairs, and threw herself on her bed in a fury and tempest of tears. She believed—as we all did—that she was bound on a quest for some relic or remnant of the dead, left carelessly by wolf or the hardly less cruel savage.

Jack, however, had given his orders that Hetty was to be ready in six days, and so there was fine stitching, and sewing, and shopping, with not much time to talk about matters. The yacht had come round from Cowes. It was to sail on Saturday, and on Friday, all day long, Rebecca was working in Hetty's cabin. She thought to herself, "What a beautiful place!" Indeed it was, for it was the cabin which Lord Ducetoy had decorated for his young wife.

She heard Lord Ducetoy's voice in the main cabin, and a lady's voice who talked to him. She could not help hearing.

"My love," said the lady, "I quite agree with you; by giving up our cruise the society gains two months. I do not regret."

"But I had her decorated for you, love—only for Channel work: and she is going to the ocean."

"Well," said Lady Ducetoy, "I frankly and freely give my decorations to the ocean. My husband has done a generous and a beautiful deed, for the sake of a noble woman; that is worth all decorations to me."

They did not know she was on board, and they did not see her; but she heard them, and after a time understood what Lady Ducetoy meant. She hid from them, and it was only after the schooner had sailed that she knew that the noble woman, spoken of by Lady Ducetoy, was no other than her own self.

Hetty dismissed her very early on the Saturday morning. On the wharf was a crowd of the strangest people—a bishop, Lord S., and Lord Ducetoy foremost—to see the schooner depart. The tug caught the schooner's hawser, and she went out through the mist into the Kent and Essex sunlight. And *that* was over.

Ducetoy and the bishop were with Rebecca as the vessel rounded the turn in the river. "Rebecca," said Lord Ducetoy, "could we have sent two better ones to seek him?"

"To seek whom?"

"Morley."

"Is he dead?"

"They are gone to see," said Lord Ducetoy; "it has been kept from you."

Rebecca stood amazed, but quite quiet.

"My dear lady," said the bishop; "this matter has been kept from you by a consultation of many men. We are very anxious about Morley, and some of us believe that there is no hope. I am not of those who think there is no hope. For I most entirely think that God has a great work in hand for Morley, and that Morley has not been taken to his rest yet. I may be wrong—who can judge God's ways?—but, my dear young lady, I believe that you will live to see Morley by your side again, doing God's work with your assistance."

"Meanwhile?" said Rebecca, calmly.

"Meanwhile," said the bishop, calmly, "do as you are doing. If you are not to meet him again on earth, you are rendering yourself more fit to meet him in heaven."

For the next nine months the inhabitants of Limehouse got familiarized to a tall and splendidly beautiful young lady, always dressed in black, who walked perpetually about among the poor, followed by a little withered lady in gray, who carried her basket, and did what the tall young lady told her with never one murmur. These two were Rebecca and Miss Soper, for Rebecca had conquered and vanquished her Soper.

Said Soper to Rebecca once, in these times, "Becky, I tried to find out the secret of living to God; and I failed, until you showed it to me. Who showed it to you?"

"Morley," said Rebecca.

Nine months; and hope growing dead as time went on. Hope of Morley utterly gone now to her, but not to others.

She was sitting in her class of girls one day, when the bishop came in, and touched her on the shoulder. Rebecca, although a dissenter, had that love and reverence for this bishop which, I believe, is common to all sects in the Church of Christ. She rose from her seat, with her black lace shawl drooping from one shoulder, and bowed deeply. And the young dissenters stared open-eyed at the spectacle of a real bishop talking to Teacher.

"I have news from the sea," said the bishop; holding out his left hand.

"Good or bad, my lord?" said Rebecca.

"That is what I can not make out," said the bishop. "We have heard from Hartop. He has recovered two, but believes Morley to be alive ten miles to the northward. Until we get his letter we know nothing."

"And when shall we get his letter?" asked Rebecca.

"Well," said the bishop, "he only allows himself ten days for exploration; and so it comes to this that he will bring his own letter."

"Then the news about Mr. Morley will be brought by Hartop and Hetty?" she said.

"That is exactly the case," said the bishop.

One summer's night—it was half past eleven—Rebecca was sitting up at some of her charity accounts, when she heard a step on the stair and sat rigid.

She knew it was Hetty's. Hetty came very quickly up the stair, threw open the door in all her full beauty, fresh from the sea, bareheaded, with the very salt on her hair. And Rebecca gave a loud wild cry, inarticulate, yet meaning much, *for she saw that Hetty was not in mourning.* Not one solitary scrap of black about her. A great deal of pink ribbon, certainly; sailors love it, and so their wives wear it.

"Becky, my sweet-heart," she said, "you must keep yourself cool."

"Is there news?" said Rebecca.

"I do not know what you mean by news, Becky," said Hetty. "But if you mean that we have found pa, and got pa, and brought pa home, and that pa is standing outside the door waiting to come in, why I say you are right." And she sat down on a chair by the door, and beat her knees, and cried.

It was actually true. From the lonely cavern on the ocean shore, death, in whose jaws he had lived so long, had given him up to love. It seemed incredible, even to Hetty now, but there was her frizzled hair smothered in Rebecca's, and she laughed and believed.

The news of the safety of Morley had been known in London before Rebecca knew it. The Society had met, and it was unanimously agreed that Mr. Morley should be requested to accept the mission to Honawoora as soon as his health would permit. The offer came to him the day after his arrival, and he answered that his health was in perfect order, and that the sooner he went the better. He wanted three weeks to be married in, and then he was ready.

One day, three weeks after this, Soper, Lord Ducetoy, Mr. Spicer, Lord S., the little Popish doctor, Mrs. Russel, the two Tibbeys, Mr. Akin, Mr. Hagbut, and Carry, and one hundred and fifty new friends, unnamed in this story, went to see the great missionary ship, *Eirene*, pass by out on her glorious expedition. As she passed they cheered, as surely no people ever cheered before, for on her quarter-deck stood Morley and Rebecca, Jack Hartop and Hetty.

They went away to the work which God had found them to do. Whether they lived long and died happy, whether they were rich or poor, or whether they had many children or few, is nothing to us. God fitted these four people for certain work in this world, and three of them had to wait till the fourth was fit to join them. I have tried to show how Rebecca was made ready for the others. Rebecca's difficulties have been so continually before one, that some might think I ought to call my story Rebecca. But I think, if you please, that in honor of the young lady, the reputation of whose deeds kept Rebecca firm, I will call my story after its real heroine, Hetty.

STRETTON

A NOVEL

BY

HENRY KINGSLEY

Author of "RAVENSHOE," "GEOFFRY HAMLYN," "HILLYARS AND THE BURTONS," &c.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

NEW YORK
LEYPOLDT & HOLT
1869

STRETTON.

BY HENRY KINGSLEY.

CHAPTER I.

DOES Nature sympathize with disaster? Of all poets' fancies, that is the most foolish. Is "the wind to be howling in turret and tree" whenever disaster, and sin, and terror are walking abroad? We should have fine weather, I trow, were that the case.

The crystal purity of a perfect evening at the end of April was settling down over the beautiful valley which lies between Shrewsbury and Ludlow: on the one hand, the Longmynd rolled its great sheets of grouse mere and scarps of rock up, fold beyond fold; while, on the other, the sharp peak of Caradoc took the evening, and smiled upon his distant brother, the cowering Plinlimmon; while Plinlimmon, in the West, with silver infant Severn streaming down his bosom, watched the sinking sun after Caradoc and Longmynd had lost it: and when it sank, blazed out from his summit a signal to his brother watchers, and, wrapping himself in purple robes, slept in majestic peace.

Down below in the valley, among the meadows, the lanes, and the fords, it was nearly as peaceful and quiet as it was aloft on the mountain-tops; and under the darkening shadows of the rapidly leafing elms, you could hear, it was so still, the cows grazing and the trout rising in the river. Day was yet alive in some region aloft in the air, loftier than the summits of Plinlimmon or Caradoc, for the democratic multitude of the stars had not been able as yet to show themselves through the train of glorious memories which the abdicated king had left behind him. The curfew came booming up the valley sleepily, and ceased. It was a land lapped in order and tradition; good landlord, good tenants, well-used labourers, if ever there were such in late years in England. Surely a land of peace!

Who comes here, along the path, through the growing clover? Who is this woman who walks swiftly, bareheaded under the dew? Who is this strange-looking woman, with an Indian shawl half-fallen off her shoulders, with clenched fists, one of which she at times beats on her beautiful head? Can it be Mrs. Evans, of the Castle, or her ghost? Or is it her in the flesh, and has she gone mad?

Such were the questions put to one another by a young pair of lovers, who watched her from beneath a plantation where they were innocently rambling. The young man said, "That is a queer sight for a fellow courting," and the young woman said, "There was too much love-making there, I doubt."

And the young man said, "How about the banns next Sunday?" And the young woman said, "Have your own way about it, and don't plague me," which, I suppose, meant "Yes."

We must follow this awful, swift-walking figure of poor Mrs. Evans, and watch her.

She was an exceedingly beautiful woman, in exact age forty-one, with that imperial, dome-like head, and splendid carriage of that same head, which the Merionethshire people say is a *specialité* of the Merediths, though I have seen it elsewhere. If you had told her that she had Celtic blood in her veins, she would probably have denied it; but she was certainly behaving in a most Celtic manner now. Anything more un-Norman than her behaviour now cannot be conceived. The low, inarticulate moans—the moans which mean so much more than speech—the wild, swift walk, the gesticulation, the clenched fists, all told of Celtic excitability; yet she was no Celt. It is only the old, stale story of *Hibernis ipsis Hiberniores.* She was behaving like a Celt because she had been brought up among them; but there was a depth of anger and fury in her heart which must have come from the conquering race.

As she neared her husband's castle, she grew more calm, adjusted her shawl, and put her hair straight; for she feared him, gentle as he was. He would have lain down so that she should walk over him; but he would have been angry with her had he seen her in her late disorder. And she had never seen his wrath but once, and that was towards his own son; and she did not care to face it, for it was as deep and as passionate as his love. So she bound up her hair, left off clenching her fists, pulled her shawl straight, and, stepping in by the flower-garden, let herself in by the postern, and appeared before him, as he stalked up and down the library.

"Is it over, darling of my heart?" he said.

"It is all over," she said, spreading her ten white fingers before her.

"And how is she?" he asked.

"She is dead!" answered Mrs. Evans. "Dead! dead! dead!" she was going on hysterically, when he caught her in his arms and kissed her into quiescence.

"Be quiet," he said; "there is trouble enough without more. What have we done, that God should afflict us like this? Is the child alive?"

"Yes; but it cannot live," replied Mrs. Evans. "It is a weak thing; but God forgive us, there is no doubt about its father."

In the house of Evans, the qualities of valour in war, of faith to the death with friends, and of strict probity towards the women of the estate, were always considered to be hereditary—more especially the last quality. The servants in the family were always taken from some family resident in the 11,000 acres which made the estate. Such of them as were traditionally supposed to require the quality of good looks, the ladies'-maids and the pad-grooms, were always selected from three or four families notorious for those qualities. Again, even in such a strong family as the Evanses, nurses were often required, and were selected always, if possible, from one of those three or four families; so that, in fact, most of the servants, male and female, were actual foster-brothers of some one member of the house. The idea of any wrong was actually incredible; but it had come, and there was wild weeping over it.

The prettiest girl of all these good-looking families had been the very last admitted into the Castle, as companion and lady's-maid to that splendid beauty Eleanor Evans. Admitted, do I say? She had been admitted when she was a wailing infant of a

week old, as foster-sister to the equally wailing Eleanor; for Mrs. Evans had not been so lucky as usual, and had kept about a little too long. Elsie grew up almost as much at Stretton as she did at her own cottage, and had been as free of the Castle as was her foster-sister Eleanor.

Perhaps, because she had had only one nurse while Eleanor had two—who can say?—she grew up very delicate and small, though very beautiful. Eleanor (I was going to say Aunt Eleanor, but must not as yet) grew up so physically strong that the wiser old ladies, after looking at her through their spectacles, pronounced that she was very splendid, but would get coarse. We shall see about that hereafter.

It was on the eve of Waterloo that the gentle little maid was fully accredited for the first time to her full powers of being thoroughly bullied by Eleanor. "Now, you little fool, I have got you, body and bones," said Eleanor, when they went up-stairs together, "and I'll make you wish you were dead in a week;" which made the little maid laugh, and yet cry; upon which great Eleanor bent down over her and kissed her. "What is the matter with you, you little idiot?" she said. "You want bullying, and you shall be bullied. Come, up, and take my hair down." And the little maid did as she told her.

"Set all the doors open," said Eleanor, "that I may walk to the end of the corridor and back. A dog would not sleep to-night. Oh, Charles! brother of my heart, acquit thyself well! My father and mother are praying for the heir of the house, but I—I, girl, cannot pray! Why are you weeping, girl?"

"I was thinking of Master Charles and the battle, miss."

"What is he to you? How dare you cry while I am dry-eyed! Idiot! Good Duke! Good Duke! Tarre! He should wait behind Soignies for Blucher; but he knows. In front of Soignies there are open downs. Child, why do you weep? Is it for your brothers, who have followed mine? I do not weep for *my* brother——"

Yes, but she did though. Broke down all in one instant, while the words were yet in her mouth. But it was soon over. She was soon after walking up and down the corridor, with her hair down, speculating on the chances of the war.

Late at night she came to her father and mother's bedroom. They had not gone to bed, but sat waiting for news, which could not possibly come for a week. "Mother," she said, "I can do nothing with my poor little maid. She has got hysterical about her two brothers at the war, and keeps accusing poor Charles, who, I am sure, never tempted them."

"What?" said Mrs. Evans, sharply.

"Keeps on accusing Charles, in the most senseless manner. I am sure——"

"Go and sit with your father," said Mrs. Evans. "Engage his attention; keep him amused. I'll see to the girl."

She went and saw to the girl; but took uncommonly good care that no one else did. She was an hour with her. When she came back to her husband's bedroom she found Eleanor sitting up, with a map of Belgium before her, chatting comfortably, but solemnly, about the movements of the armies.

She had seen the girl, she said; and the girl was hysterical about her brothers, and accused Charles of leading them to the war. The girl was weak in her health, and would be always weak. The girl had always been a fool, and apparently intended to remain one. The girl must have change of air and scene. She had an aunt at Carlisle, who kept a stationer's shop. The girl must go there for a time; for there was trouble enough without *her*

tantrums. Charles, with his furious, headlong way of doing things, was almost certainly killed, &c., &c., with a sly, kind eye on her husband and her daughter.

They both were on her in a moment, at such a supposition. She, when she saw that she had led them on the wrong scent, recovered her good temper, and allowed them to beat her from pillar to post, while they proved that the allies would carry everything before them, and that nothing could happen to Charles (except accidents of war, which are apt to be numerous). Yet, complacent as she was, there were times when her hands caught together and pulled one another, as though the right hand would have pulled the fingers up by the roots. These were the times when she was saying to herself, about her own darling son, "He had better die there! He had better die there!"

For the rest nothing was to be noted in this lady's behaviour for the present, save that the new lady's-maid was sent to Carlisle, that Mrs. Evans seemed to take the news of Waterloo rather coolly, and that she received her son, now Captain Evans, with extreme coolness on his return from Waterloo, covered with wounds and glory.

She thought him guilty. Why should she say to him, "Honourable conduct is of more avail than glory"? He was chilled and offended, for he felt himself innocent.

What was he like at this time? For the present we must take his sister Eleanor's account of him, who says that he was the very image of his son, Roland,—which must be very satisfactory to the reader. The ladies may like to know, however, by the same authority, that if my friend, Eleanor, is right, and that Charles Evans was like his son Roland, that he was also, by the same authority, extremely like Antinous.

Antinous Charles had been brought up with this poor, pretty little maid, Elsie, and he had fallen in love with her, and she with him, which was against the rules of the house of Evans, for she was foster-sister of *his* sister. They loved like others. In what followed, Charles's own mother was against him, and gave him up as a villain, who had transgressed the immutable traditions of the house. One of the girl's brothers was killed at Waterloo, one came home with Charles, as his regimental servant. Charles gave out that he was going to London; but his silly servant came home to Stretton and vaguely let out the fact that Captain Charles had not been to London at all, but had been to Carlisle to see his sister, Elsie.

Mr. Evans's fury was terrible. He wrote in a friendly way to the colonel of Charles's regiment, begging him, as an old friend, to recall Charles instantly, and save him from what he feared was a very low intrigue. He sent old Mrs. Gray, the girl's mother, off to Carlisle after her daughter at once, bearing such a letter as made Charles avoid home in returning to Chatham, at the peremptory summons of his commanding officer.

Let us say but little about it, as it is not among such painful scenes as this that we shall have to walk together. Charles had not been very long at Carlisle, but he had been too long it seemed. The unhappy girl came home, and was confined in six months' time. She died that night, but the child lingered on, and on.

Did Mrs. Evans wish that it should die? Who can say? Did she wish the disgrace buried and ended? Who can say? I think, however, that she slept none the worse after Mrs. Gray came to her and told her that the child was dead.

It had been baptized, and so was buried and registered: the illegitimate

son of Elsie Gray: the sexton patted down the turf, and all the scandal was over and done. Old James Evans said that Charles was now free for a new start, and had better go to India on his roster, and had better not come home first. And so a pale and rather wild-looking young captain paraded his company on the main-deck of the East India Company's ship, the Veda, and sailed for India accordingly.

"Taking things rather coolly," you say. Why no, but somewhat hotly: yet submitting. This young fellow of a captain had violated every traditional rule of his house, and felt guilty. Yet he was not without sources of information. He dared not face his family in the state of things as they were; and he dared not see the woman he loved best in the world. He consoled himself and her by passionate, wild, foolish letters, carefully transmitted, and carefully and tenderly answered, not only to poor Elsie, but also to his sister Eleanor, whom we shall see again. When unhappy affairs of this kind take place, there are apt to be domestic scenes. I will give you one.

At breakfast, one bright May morning, some two months before Elsie and the child so soon to die was born, Eleanor had a letter, and was reading it. Her mother looked at her father, and her father looked at her mother, and at last her father, Squire James Evans, spoke.

"My dear Eleanor you have a letter from your brother Charles. Will you let me read it."

"No, I won't," said Eleanor.

"Is that the way to speak to your father?" said Mrs. Evans.

"Yes," said Eleanor, "if he proposes to read letters which are not directed to him. The letter is from Charles to me; if he had intended to let my father see it, he would have directed it to him. He, on the other hand, has directed it to me, and I mean to keep it to myself."

Mrs. Evans wept.

Squire Evans said, "This is well. My son has been a villain, and my daughter backs him up."

"You do ill to call your son a villain, sir," replied Aunt Eleanor. "Call him fool and coward, but you do ill, you two, to call him villain." And so Aunt Eleanor, then, by the way, a very beautiful young girl of eighteen, takes up her letter, and scornfully sweeps out of the room, with her nose in the air. Fine times indeed!

Poor Elsie Gray was with her mother, as we said, and that devoted woman had more than one trouble on her hands at a time. It turned out now that young Robert Gray, the soldier-servant of Charles, had quietly without leave of his commandant without the slightest means of supporting her, married a pretty girl two parishes off, and now wrote coolly to his mother from Chatham to announce the fact, and inform his mother that the young lady would come to her for her confinement.

This child, as Mrs. Gray could tell, was born at the same time or nearly as the other. And the soldier's child lived, while the child of his master died. Little Gray grew up, and grew strong. And we shall have to see a great deal of him in many positions. It was about three weeks after Mrs. Evans came wringing her hands through the green lanes, lamenting the dishonour of her husband's house and her own, that the other little child wailed itself into silence, into peace, into death, and was heard of no more.

CHAPTER II.

WAS Mrs. Evans sorry? Who can say. Those Merediths and Ap-Merediths, who call themselves Celtic, yet are as Norse as they can look at you out of their two eyes, have a singularly un-Celtic trick of concealing emotion.

Eleanor could not say whether her mother was sorry or glad.

It was not the custom, in families of that class, for the mother to allude, even in the most distant way, to her daughters on any points regarding marriage relations. Mrs. Evans broke through this rule once, and when her daughter and she were alone, said, very quietly, "That child of Gray, the soldier's, is growing strong and hearty. You are old enough to understand that if things had gone right, that child would have called you aunt. His father is the brother of the woman whom you should have called sister, had it not been for the incalculable villany of Charles."

"Mother, leave Charles alone. I will not have Charles abused."

"A most maidenly, daughterly speech," said Mrs. Evans, scornfully.

"Mother, I mean all duty; but circumstances alter cases."

"This is well," said Mrs. Evans. "This is uncommonly well. There is some old cross of the Evans blood coming out here. This is the Duchess of N——'s blood, I doubt, which is now defying her own flesh and blood."

"Don't talk like that, mother."

"I will not," replied Mrs. Evans; "but allow me to tell you that if Lord Homerton had heard you utter such atrocious sentiments, he would at once cease his visits, and would not propose."

"Oh, he has proposed," said Eleanor. "He proposed yesterday."

"What did he say?" said Mrs. Evans, eagerly.

"Well," said Eleanor, coolly, "he merely, as I believe men do (and dreadful fools they look when they do it), asked me if he might consider himself engaged to be married to me?"

"And what did you say?" asked Mrs. Evans.

"I said that I was at a loss to conceive what he had seen in my conduct which induced him to take such an unwarrantable liberty."

"Good heavens!" said Mrs. Evans. "Then are you off with him?"

"I never was on with him that I know of," said Eleanor. "He is a good fellow, and I like him well; but I don't see why I should marry him. We shouldn't get on. He is not religious, and does not care for his estate."

"Your influence would have made him care for both his estate and his religion," said Mrs. Evans.

"Not a bit of it," replied Eleanor. "George *is* a man, although we never hit it off together."

"Is it hopeless?" said Mrs. Evans. "How did you dismiss him?"

"Well, I kissed him, and as he went out of the room, I gave him a pat on the back, and I said, 'Go on, George; go off to Greenwood. There is a girl there, worth fifty of me, who is dying for you. You would never have made such a fool of yourself about me, if it had not been for our two families.' And then he wanted to kiss me again, but I would not stand that. And so he rode off to Greenwood, and I think you will find that Laura Mostyn will be announced as Lady Homerton next week."

"You will never be married at this rate," said Mrs. Evans, biting her lip.

"Never mean to make such a fool of myself," replied Eleanor.

"A woman must marry to get position and station," said Mrs. Evans, looking keenly, and in a puzzled manner, on this radiant young beauty of eighteen.

"I have both," said Eleanor. "I have the Pulverbatch Farm, and that will bring me in £500 a year, and take up all my time. I tell you that I don't choose to have any husband but one, and he is my brother Charles. Let us drop this perfectly vain conversation, and tell me what you want done about this child."

Mrs. Evans was beaten by that inexorable, beautiful face. She said, after

a pause, "I wish you quietly to be godmother to it, and when I am dead, to look to it. We have done evil enough to that family as it is."

"Is it to be brought up as a gentleman?" she asked.

"Certainly not," said her mother; "only respectably. I wish you would undertake it for me, for the sight of the child and of the whole of that family is distasteful to me."

Eleanor said, "Yes," wondering. But when she said yes she meant yes, and she did what was desired of her.

CHAPTER III.

THE sudden and very lamentable death of Squire James Evans in the hunting-field, threw a gloom, not in the mere newspaper acceptation of the term, but in reality, over that part of Shropshire, for nearly a week. He was a most deservedly popular man, and what they wrote on his tomb was every word of it true. He *was* a good son, a good husband, a good father, a good landlord, a pious churchman, a firm friend, and he died without one single enemy. One little fact was omitted from his tombstone: he died without being reconciled to his son, at least formally. There may have been a reconciliation at heart, and those low, inarticulate moans, as he lay dying in his groom's arms in the ditch, may have been the attempted expression of it, but the mouth was loose in death before they were ever uttered.

Mrs. Evans was not long after him. She was aged and worried, and she moped and brooded until she died. The old clergyman who attended her at the last, left her at the very last with a dissatisfied and rather puzzled face. Eleanor she would not see for the last four days.

Well, she died. And it took nearly six months to communicate to Squire Charles, his most sudden and unexpected succession. He came home at the end of a year, and found Eleanor, his sister, in possession, keeping all things square for him: receiving rents, bullying attorneys, walking up and down among the farms, in a dress which was considered remarkable even in those times, and attending to the wants of the tenants. She had practically given one of the family livings away, quite illegally, though the young curate to whom she gave it, took possession, as a matter of course. On the other hand, she had been rather tight with the tenants on the subject of repairs; and, it is reported, used the word "humbug," just then coming into fashion, on more than one occasion. They tell an idle tale, those Shropshire folks. They say that she and the steward were standing together on the terrace, when Sir Charles rode up, on his arrival from India; that the steward said, "Thank Heaven, he has come at last." And that Aunt Eleanor said, "I quite agree. Now you and he take the estates in hand, for I am sick of it. And a nice mess you will make of it together, you two."

They did nothing of the kind, however. The property did rather better under the more liberal rule of Squire Charles than under the near and close rule of his sister, Eleanor. Women are apt to be very near and mean in business. They will *give* as few men will *give*, but they will haggle about sixpence, while they are irritating a good tenant. Was not the Antiquary, as near a man as another, upbraided by his usually submissive womankind for "raising the price of fish on them"?

Eleanor the beautiful, whiffed away from her brother's establishment at once, leaving him to manage his somewhat irritated tenants, and retired to her own farm at Pulverbatch. She marched off with her the young child Gray.

The scandal about Charles Evans and Elsie Gray was known to very few persons, and was now almost forgotten even by those few: scarcely half a dozen all told. As for the county, they had never heard of it, and even if they had, would have taken small note of it, for there were plenty of scandals of the same kind in any one of *their* families. If it had got wind, the more ill-natured of them would have been pleased at such a fiasco occurring in such a saint-like family as the Evanses. But then it never did get wind, and Charles Evans was welcomed to his ancestral halls by the county generally, with lute, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all manner of musical instruments. He lied a little, I doubt, at the very first reception, for on being inquired of by the county, where was his sister Eleanor, he replied, that she was not well, and having been overpowered by his sudden return, had gone home to her farm at Pulverbatch; whereas, the truth was, that she was perfectly well, and had told him the day before that she was not in sufficient temper to meet all these idiots, and walked off to Pulverbatch, promising to come back to him as soon as he had got rid of his fools.

Yet they had had a pleasant meeting these two: worth giving perhaps. He took her in his arms, and she wound her fingers in his hair. And he said:

"Love all the same, sister?"

And she said: "Not all the same, but more."

"Has anybody been?" said the brother.

"I should like to see them," said the sister. "My dear, I must marry you. No other arrangement is possible. Get rid of these fools, and find yourself a good wife, and I will come back and marry the pair of you."

"But who is to marry you?" said the brother.

"You," said the sister.

CHAPTER IV.

It was a long time before Sir Charles married, but at last, when he was five-and-thirty, he married a Miss Meredith, a very distant connection to him by birth, who, as Eleanor said, had been kept by her parents for him, till, like a brown Beurre pear, she was running a chance of being mildewed. Eleanor came to the wedding and signalized herself by utterly routing and defeating a certain Squire Overley, a most estimable man, of great wealth even in Shropshire, who was supposed to be seeking her hand in marriage. She was very civil to him, but refused to speak of anything except medical science and the management of nursing sisterhoods. She beat that estimable young man, and saw that she had done so. "Heigh ho!" she said, as she got into bed. "One more goose choked, and another fool married. I'll be back with my pigs to-morrow. Overley is a good fellow though, and I'll find him a good wife. I wonder if Charley will let me have that sixty acres that Pilgrim wants to give up. If he don't I must give up my pigs; for buy meal, I won't." And so the great Shropshire beauty went to her bed and slept the sleep of the just.

Charles's marriage was one of the most happy ones which ever took place, either in Novel-land or Earth-land. Within a year Roland, whom I hope you will get to like, was born; and Eleanor was asked to be godmother. She, dating from Pulverbatch, replied that she hated boys, because they were always wanting their ears boxed. She would undertake this part of a godmother's business with the greatest pleasure, but as a conscientious woman she could not, in this case. She had invested, for her, hea-

vily in old Berkshire pigs, which took up the main of her time, and, as a boy's ears always required to be boxed on the spot to produce the proper effect, she doubted that she could not be always on the spot to box them, so she declined, and bred pigs, not even coming to the christening.

The next year was born Edward, whom I also hope that you will like. Once more Eleanor was asked to be godmother; once more she refused, but she came to the great christening party, as she did not to the first one. No one, not even her own brother, knew if she was coming or not. A splendid present of plate for the child had arrived from her, but she put in no appearance until just before the second lesson. Then she swept in, splendidly dressed in grey silk, and sat down among the poor folks by the organ.

Old Major Venables said, afterwards, "That woman made a sensation; but don't you think she meant to do it? I tell you that those Evanses mean what they say, and do what they mean, and the deuce can't prevent them. What the deuce Eleanor means, I can't say. But she'll do it."

CHAPTER V.

It soon became evident what she meant to do. Although she protested against any religious responsibility towards Edward, she nevertheless undertook any amount of physical responsibility. She even determined to assist at his education, to attend as far as she could to his diet, and to define and develop his character, which latter part of her programme she accomplished by allowing him to do exactly as he pleased, and giving him everything he asked for. Mr. Evans told her that she would spoil the child. "I want to spoil him," she said. "He wants spoiling. I intend to gain an influence over him by that means, and use it for good. Our young one is a very sensitive and affectionate young one, and must be treated accordingly."

Meanwhile she had fairly done her duty, and her mother's behests towards young Allen Gray, the soldier's son. She had quietly and unostentatiously got him well educated at Ludlow, and at his own request had apprenticed him to a jeweller's in Shrewsbury. She nearly considered herself quit of him; and his distant connection with the family was scarcely known by any one except herself, and almost forgotten even by her.

Among the tastes early developed by Master Edward, under his aunt's direction, was a liking for jewellery, for bright and glittering things. One of the greatest pleasures of his life, for some little time, was riding into Shrewsbury to shop with his aunt. Aunt Eleanor had given him a watch and chain, and on this chain he had the fancy to hang breloques; fish, lizards, crosses, lockets, which you will. And this shop, where young Gray—Aunt Eleanor's other *protégé*—was located, supplied things of this kind, of Palais Royal manufacture, cheap, soon dimmed in rust, soon cast aside. Young Evans soon got over this fancy of his for glittering things, though he always retained his passion for gaudry; yet his continual going into this shop to get these two-penny Palais Royal trifles, led to a result with which we have to do. It led to an acquaintance between him and the youth, Gray, who was deputed to sell them to him. And the youth Gray was as fond of glittering and gaudy things as was Childe Evans. And so the youth and the young boy, setting their heads together, "Ye'll no hinder them," as the Scotch say, from getting uncommonly fond of one another. Roland always disliked him, as far as his gentle nature could allow him to dislike any one. But at any time, when Roland denounced young Gray as a

sententious young Methodist, Edward would plead so well with his deer-like eyes, that he would cause Roland's objurgations to die away into silence.

Roland and Edward, when old enough, were sent to a school, which I will call Gloucester, to avoid personality, reserving always for myself, in case of action for damages, the right of fixing my own dates.

Our young jeweller's master moved from Shrewsbury to Gloucester a short time before Roland and Edward went into school there together; and so Edward and Allen Gray were once more brought together. The acquaintance between Gray and Childe Evans got cemented there, not much to Roland's pleasure. Edward bought no jewellery now, but got himself taken to strange places of worship by this imperial-looking young jeweller's apprentice, who could look at the splendid Roland as though he were an Oliver (forgive me). Roland did not like it, any more than the Doctor. The Doctor said that Roland should speak to Edward on the subject. Roland, though only fourteen, to his brother's thirteen, declined.

"It would bring a cloud between Eddy and myself," said the boy, "and I intend that there shall be no cloud between Eddy and me till we die."

Of course, with a fool of fourteen like this, there was nothing to be done. The Doctor pitched into Eddy. "It is not unknown to me, sir, that you have been in the company of an apprentice of this town, not only to a dissentient place of worship, but also to the Papist Chapel. It is the greatest scandal which has occurred at this school since its foundation. I shall write to your father."

"I wouldn't do that, sir," said poor little Eddy; "we were only looking about for ourselves. And we don't like either the one thing or the other."

"*You* like!" said the Doctor. "*You* like! Here, I'll sort *your* nonsense pretty quick. What was last week's memoriter?" "Non ebur neque aureum," began the poor boy, "Mea renidet in——"

"Write it out twenty times, sir, and keep school," said the Doctor. "We will have a finish and an end of all this."

Roland did his brother's task for him, and was furious against the Doctor. But as Roland's fury against the Doctor will have to keep six years, by which time it had become changed to love and reverence, I will say little about it. Merely mentioning the fact that there was a third member of the Evans's family, a pretty little girl, I will leave the Evans family—for what will be to you a few minutes—and describe another Shropshire family.

CHAPTER VI.

OLD Mordaunt, of Mordaunt Hall, used to say that his wife always had twins. When this statement was examined, you found that Mrs. Mordaunt had but two children—Johnny immediately after her marriage, and Jemmy twelve months afterwards, yet

"The petrified spectator asked, in undisguised alarm,"

which was Johnny and which was Jemmy, used to solve the problem by saying that Johnny was the fatter. But then neither of them *was* fat.

One—the elder—was broader, and less symmetrical than the younger one, James, more commonly called Jimmit. During the holidays, part of which young Edward Evans spent with his Aunt Eleanor, these two youths were frequent guests at her house. She pronounced them to be entirely similar, and utterly devoid of character. In which opinion she was not wholly right.

The Evanses and the Mordaunts both went to Gloucester together, and, as neighbours, saw a great deal of one another. Both families also had

a little girl, younger than either of the brothers, with whom, at present, we have nothing to do—they were in the school-room still; and I have been turned out of the school-room by the governess at lesson-time too often to try and enter it again. By-the-bye, are governesses so dreadfully bullied and ill-treated, as it is the custom to represent? For my part, ever since I was six years old until now, I have been almost as afraid of them as I am of a schoolmaster, and have been used to see them have pretty much their own way; but there are families, and families, no doubt.

I must quit speculation to give a letter, which was written at the time when these four lads were at ages ranging from seventeen to nineteen, and were all going up to matriculate at St. Paul's College—at either university you like. It came from the headmaster of Gloucester Grammar School, himself a man from Trinity College, Cambridge, and was addressed to the Senior Tutor at St. Paul's—his old friend and contemporary.

"DEAR GEORGE,—You have asked me more than once to send you a boy or two, and I have always hesitated, because I have always disliked your college, its ways, and its works. Now, however, that P—— E—— and O—— have married off altogether on college livings, and have undertaken cures of souls (their creed seeming to be that gentlemen's sons have no souls, or, like the French marquis, will be saved by rent-roll); now that you are first in command practically, I send you, my dear George, not one boy, but a batch of four. And, take them all in all, they are the finest batch of boys I have ever turned out.

"Let us speak plainly to one another, for we have never fairly done so. The reason of your clinging so strenuously to University work was the death of my cousin Mary. Well, we have never spoken of it before. I only ask you to stick to it a little longer, if it is only to see this batch of boys through.

"I don't know whether I am justified in sending them to you. You know, my dear George, that your college has been under the management of your old master and the three men who have retired to the cure of agricultural labourers' souls; very fast, very disreputable, and most extravagantly expensive. Nothing seems to have done well but the boat, which, having less than a mile to row, has, by developing a blind, furious ferocity, kept the head of the river. And in the schools you have only had a few first-class men, all of your training, with second, third, and fourth blanks.

"You say that you will mend all, and raise your tone. Of course you will. If I don't die like Arnold over this teaching, I will send you any number of boys in two years, when your influence has begun to work, and when the influence of the three pastors so lately sent out from high table and common room to catch agricultural sheep by the leg with their crook (Heaven save the mark!) has died out. But at present I am dubious. However, I have *done* it. Mind you the issue, as you will have to appear before God.

"Now, I must tell you about these fellows, and must go through them. In the aggregate, they are an extremely queer lot. They are extremely rude and boisterous, as my boys generally are, though perfect gentlemen if you put them on their mettle. They are absolutely innocent of the ways of the world, and will, no doubt, get thoroughly laughed out of all that by your young dandies, whom I, as a Cambridge man, most entirely detest. To proceed about the aggregate of them, they are all very strong and very rich. The total of their present income is considerably more than

you and I shall have the spending of when we have worked ourselves to the gates of death, and they have taken to boat-racing—a thing I hate and detest from the bottom of my soul, as being one of the most stupid and most brutalizing of all our sports. I know, however, that you do not think so. If there was any chance of their losing all their property together, we might make something of them. As it is, you must back up my efforts to make something of them. Nothing stands in their way but their wealth.

"Now, I will begin with them individually, and I begin with Roland Evans. Do you retain your old Platonic love for perfect physical beauty, perfect innocence, and high intelligence and ambition? If so, you had better not see too much of my Aristides, Antinous Evans. The lad wonders why I laugh when I look at him. I laugh with sheer honest pleasure at his beauty. He is like the others, a boy of many prayers, but of few fears. If he could get his influence felt in your deboshed old college, he would do as much as you, old friend. But he is so gentle, and so young, that I fear he will not do much for you at once.

"I pass to the elder Mordaunt. The elder Mordaunt is a wonderfully strong, bull-headed lad, whose course at school has been perfectly blameless, fulfilling every possible duty, but declining to show any *specialité* except wonderful Latin prose. There is something under the thick hide of him somewhere, for I have seen it looking at me from behind that dark brown eye of his a hundred times. Can you fetch it out? I have not been able. I have often been inclined to throw the book at the head of this young man, in return for his quiet, solemn, contemplative stare; but I have never done so. I flogged him once, because Sir Jasper Meredith (a cripple) let off a musical box in chapel, and I thought it was the elder Mordaunt. It was arranged between the Mordaunts and Merediths that the elder Mordaunt was to take the thrashing, because little Sir Jasper was not fit to take it. Sir Jasper Meredith came crying to me afterwards, and told the whole business. I never had occasion to flog the elder Mordaunt again. Be careful of this fellow, George. I don't understand him. You may.

"I come now to the younger Mordaunt. And now I find that I have to tell a little story. Young Mordaunt was an unimpressionable lad, quite unnoticed by me, and nearly so by the lower masters, under whose hands he was passing, who only made their reports on him to me for extreme violence and fury. I have often had to flog this boy—you say what a nice employment for an educated gentleman—*cela va sans dire;* and on one occasion, I held him ready for expulsion. It was the most terrible case of bullying which had ever happened: four fifth-form boys, just ready for the sixth, had set on a sixth-form boy, just about to leave us for the army, and beaten him with single-sticks, to that extent that he had to be taken to the hospital, as it appeared, with his own consent, for he made no complaint. The younger Mordaunt was one of the beaters, one of the attacking party, and I was going to expel them all, until the elder Mordaunt, backed by my brother, the master of the lower third, explained the circumstances, upon which I did a somewhat different thing. I held my tongue, and gave the beaten boy a chance for a new life.

"The elder Mordaunt and the elder Evans, Roland, lately grandfathers of the school, have always respected and honoured one another. But between the young Mordaunt and the elder Evans there was for a long time a great dislike. I have it from a former monitor, now Balliol scholar, that they actually fought on three occasions.

Of course they were no match; the elder Evans easily beat the younger Mordaunt, while the elder Mordaunt, although an affectionate brother, positively declined to give his younger brother even the use of his knee during these encounters.

"The reason of the reconciliation between these two was odd. The cause of these encounters was the persistent bullying of the younger Evans, who was the fag of the younger Mordaunt. I have always forbidden bathing before the tenth of May, and have seldom been disobeyed. On one occasion, however, the younger Mordaunt disobeyed me, and before the winter's water was run off, determined to bathe in the weir, and having told his intention to a few, started, taking his fag, little Eddy Evans, to mind his clothes.

"It came to the ears of Roland Evans and old Mordaunt, who followed quickly with some other sixth-form boys, and were happily in time. You, as an Oxford man, know what Lashers are; you know the Gaisford and Phillimore monument, set up to warn boys, if they could be warned, of the deadly suck under the apron.

"Well, the younger Mordaunt stripped and headed into the furious boil. He was in difficulties directly. Instead of being carried down into the shallow below, he was taken under, and disappeared. He rose again, and with infinite courage and coolness, swam into the slack water, and tried to hold on by the Camp's heading. But it was slippery, and he was carried again into the race, and turned over and over.

"When old Evans and old Mordaunt came, angrily, on the scene, all they saw was young Evans tearing the last of his clothes off. He knew his brother's voice, and he cried out, 'Shut down the paddles; he has come up again.' And then, forgetting cruelties which he had suffered, and insults which he had wept over in secret, he cast his innocent little body into the foaming dangerous lasher, and had his bitter enemy round the waist in one moment, trying to keep his head above the drowning rush of the water. Of course, Roland was in after them in a few seconds.

"Cool old Mordaunt, who should be a general, I think, had, while rapidly undressing, let down the paddles. The pool was still now, too terribly still, they tell me. The two elder lads, swimming high and looking for their brothers, saw neither, until the handsome little head of Eddy Evans rose from the water, and said, 'I had him here, this instant, and he will be carried back by the wash.' Roland Evans, a splendid shoulder-swimmer, was with his brother in a moment, and saw young Mordaunt drowning on the gravel beneath him, spreading out his fine limbs, like a Christopher's cross, with each of his ten fingers spread out, taking leave of the world. Never seen it? Better not; it is ugly; I have seen it several times, and don't like it. Well, the two Evans's had him out on the shallow before his brother, a slow breast-swimmer, could come up, and saved him. That is all my story.

"But it has changed this younger Mordaunt's life in some way. The great temptation of our English boys is brutality and violence, and this bathing accident has tamed him. The boy prayed more, as I gained from his brother, and desired that thanks should be given in chapel for his preservation, coupled (fancy that! to me,) with the condition that the names of the two Evanses should be mentioned with his. I refused to do so: heaven knows why! Whereupon the boy turned on *me*, and, face to face, refused to have any thanks given at all. He said he would give his own thanks.

"He is entirely tamed, if you can keep him *en rapport* with these two Evanses.

He will follow them anywhere, and do just as they tell him, whether that be right or wrong. I never liked him, and I still think him boyish in many ways, though innocent almost to childishness in the way you wot of. He has brains, more brains than his brother. But he is a disagreeable boy. He has a nasty way of sitting straight up and frowning, and there is a petulant preciseness about him which I cannot bear. Try being civil and kind to him—I have never been. You have more power in that way as a Don than I have as a schoolmaster.

"Now I come to my last boy, young Evans. I won't say anything at all about this boy: I leave him to you. If you can stand his pretty ways, I can't.

"These boys will be a terrible plague to you. They make so much noise: don't stop them in that if you can help it. My best boys are noisy and outspoken. Coming from me, you need not doubt their scholarship: keep it up. They are, to conclude, an innocent lot of lads, dreadfully rich, and have taken up, I fear, with this most abominable boat-racing, which, however, is not so bad as steeple-chasing.

"Now good-bye. I have sent you a team fit for Balliol in scholarship, for Christchurch in breeding, and, I very much fear, for Brazenose in boating. Why Providence should have placed so many of our public schools near great rivers, where the stock gets steadily brutalized by that insane amusement, I cannot conceive. Old religious foundations, you say, always near rivers, then highways, and in the neighbourhood of fish for fast days. Fiddle-de-dee! It all arises from the perversation (misrepresentation) of the edicts of the first original council, in the year 1, when it was agreed that every thing was to be where it was wanted. The only dissentient, you well remember, was the devil, who moved as an amendment, that there should be full liberty of conscience, that every one should say the first thing which came into his head, and everybody was to do as he pleases. The great first council rejected, if you remember, this amendment with scorn; but we are acting on it now. Let us take the benefit of the new opinions. Come over and talk Swivellerism to me, and I will back myself to talk as much balderdash as you. But don't talk any of it to my boys. I insult you, my dear George, by the supposition.

"P.S.—A tall, handsome-looking young booby, from Eton, comes with them from Shropshire. His father, calling here with the fathers of the other boys, asked me to say a good word to you on his behalf. I would if I could, but I don't know anything at all about him, except that he is to be married to Miss Evans, by a family arrangement, before he is capable of knowing his own mind. He has been brought up with the Evanses and the Mordaunts, and therefore cannot be very bad. But you know my opinion of Eton, and indeed of all public schools except my own."

CHAPTER VII.

FURNISHED with this important epistle, the Dean of St. Paul's (college) felt a natural curiosity to see the young men who had attracted so much of the attention of undoubtedly the very best schoolmaster of the day, since the *dies in faustus* when Arnold's old pupil came down to breakfast with fresh questions, and heard that *the* master had called for *his* master, and that he had arisen and followed him speedily

The Dean was a dry man, and a man of humour. Saint Paul's was, in those times, a queer, wild place; it was partly "manned" by county gentlemen's and country parsons' sons, from the counties of Gloucestershire, Wor-

cester, Shropshire, and generally from the Welsh borders; and partly from two grammar schools in Lancashire and the West Riding of York. The two sets of lads never spoke to one another. The former set were always perfectly gentlemen in their manners, though not always in their morals: that latter were mainly gentleman in their morals, but never in their manners. It was vinegar upon nitre with them, and the dry, shrewd, caustic Dean looked with great anticipation of amusement for the curious "team" which the head-master of Gloucester had sent him up.

He had undertaken the Latin prose lecture of that somewhat scholarless college, and had repeatedly said that it would bring him to an untimely grave, but after a fellow-commoner translating "The Art of Mingling in Society" in English of Addison, into Latin of his own, the Dean had dropped the Latin prose lecture, and had taken to the Greek. "You are safer in Greek," he said. "I am not good in Greek, and so I may live the longer. But I couldn't stand the Latin any more."

So it was in the Greek prose lecture that the Dean expected his young friends, with great curiosity. They were the first who came, very early, and they came sidling and whispering into the room one after another, and sat down in a row, each one saying as he went by, "Good morning, sir," while the Dean stood and looked at them. Can one not see him now, with his broad shoulders, and his keen eyes looking out from under his wig?

They sat down in the chair opposite to him, and he had a good look at them. The first who came in was Roland Evans, evidently leader among them, a splendid upstanding young fellow, with short curling hair, who carried his head like a stag. "A fine face and a good head," thought the Dean. "I wonder what is inside it?" Next to him came his brother—a small, slight, bright-looking lad, rather too pretty to please the Dean's taste, but pleasant to see, with a wistful look in his clear brown eyes, which the Dean did not disapprove of. Next came the elder of the two Mordaunts, gigàntic, somewhat stolid in appearance, looking as the Dean thought with Falstaff, "land and beeves." Then came the younger Mordaunt, gigantic also, and rather cross-looking, but with a good square head; as he passed on, he gave one look at the Dean, and let him know unmistakably that he considered him in the light of his natural enemy. Last of all, came the "booby" who was to marry Miss Evans, and when the Dean looked on him, he thought at once: "The rest are a puzzling lot, but there is no doubt about you; you carry your turnpike ticket in your hat; you are a good fellow, and so I think is that Roland Evans."

But he was puzzlingly amused by them on one account: four out of the five seemed strangely cast in the same mould. Here were two pairs of brothers, and a fifth young man, and they were all cast in the same mould, with the exception of the younger Evans, who seemed poetical. Had this batch of lads come under his notice with any other recommendation than that of the shrewd Doctor, he would have set them down for four young louts of the land-holding persuasion from the western counties, and have thought no more about them; but his friend had sent them to him as four of his picked boys, and Balliol would have opened her gates to them; yet there they sat in a row before him, silent and apparently stupid, occasionally sneaking their eyes up at his, as though to see what he was like, but dropping them again directly. "*Is* there character here?" the Dean asked himself. "K. should know; he said they were boisterous and troublesome. They are quiet enough now."

The odd contrast between the apparently stupid insouciance of the Englishman at one time, and his violent fury at another, seemed to be hardly known to the Dean as yet: he got an illustration of it.

The other men, to the number of some thirty, dropped in, and the lecture proceeded. Anything more saint-like than the behaviour of the Shropshire five was never seen. The lecture consisted in turning "Spectator" into Greek prose, and after half an hour, every one being ready, the Dean called on Roland Evans, who stood up, and on being told that he might sit down, was very much confused. He read out his few sentences of Greek prose, and the Dean leant back in his chair.

"That is really splendid, Mr. Evans. I could not write such Greek myself. Read it again, please, and listen to it, you others." Roland did so.

"Do you all write Greek like this at Gloucester? This is refreshing. Good heavens! when I think of the trash my ears are dinned with. Here, Mr. Mordaunt the elder, read *your* piece next: let me see if it runs in families, or is common to the school."

Old Mordaunt—sitting, as we used used to say at school, one place below young Evans—did so, and his piece was very good. "Now, young Mr. Evans, read yours."

It appeared that these youths were under the impression that they could *take places*. They had come in and sat down in their old Gloucester class form. Young Eddy Evans had in his piece a passage of Addison's or Steele's in which occur the words, "pray do not deceive yourselves on this matter." Young Evans gave it "*μη πλανασθη*." Whereupon both the Mordaunts rose to their feet, and cried with one voice, "I challenge."

Before the astonished Dean could say one word, the two brothers were at it tooth and nail.

"I challenged first," said old Mordaunt.

"You did nothing of the kind," said the younger. "You read the fourth chapter of Acts, and see what happened to Ananias and Sapphira."

"That's a pretty thing to say to your own brother," said old Mordaunt.

"Not a worse thing than trying to cut your own brother out of a place. Why do you challenge?" said the younger brother.

"Because it's Greek Testament," said the elder scornfully.

"Testament Greek is good enough—better than you could write. I challenge on other grounds. Ask him, sir, what letter he puts before the sigma."

The younger Evans, confused and directed by his evil genius, said hurriedly, "Epsilon." The younger Mordaunt at once sank back in his chair with the air of a man who had done a happy thing, and, addressing the Dean, said—

"This, sir, is a specimen of the scholarship of the Doctor's house-boys. If a commons house-boy had made such a mess, he would have been cobbed by the school."

At which dreadful words wrath and fury were depicted on the faces of the two Evans, and of Maynard, who was engaged to their sister. Young Evans rose, perfectly calm, and, addressing the Dean as "Dominus," said that, as the rules of English society prevented one boy from personally asking any explanation from any other boy in class, and indeed, in any place but the playground, whether he, the Dominus, would be so good as to demand, *in* his character as Dominus, of Mordaunt minor, when he was caned last, and what it was for. Whereupon Maynard, who had taken no part as yet, cried out, "Go it young Evans!"

"It was your brother who pressed the spring and set it going," said old Mordaunt.

"It was nothing of the kind; and no one knows it better than yourself," said Roland Evans. "I never touched it; what did he want with it at chapel?"

"I suppose he could take his musical snuff-box into chapel," said old Mordaunt, now, after the preliminary skirmish in close alliance with his brother. "I suppose he had as good a right to bring his musical box in as you had to bring your Buttmann's Lexilogus."

"Well, you need not turn up old things like that," said Roland Evans.

"Then you leave my brother alone, and I'll leave you alone. As for you young Evans, you ought to have the Lexilogus banged about your stupid young head, and you would have had three months ago."

The Dean had by this time partly recovered from the stupor into which he had been plunged by this unexpected and violent storm. He found breath enough to say, "Gentlemen, I must really request, and of necessity insist, that this unseemly objurgation ceases at once." After a few growls and sniffs the lecture proceeded. The Gloucester boys' Greek was all nearly first-class, and then the Dean waded away into a slough of miserable stuff, which was furnished to him three times a week by the other men of his college.

A deaf fellow-commoner was blundering along through his piece, and the Dean thought that everything was going right, when the younger Mordaunt, who had been frowning and bristling for some time, finding his recollected wrongs too great to be kept in any longer, suddenly broke into articulate speech. To the unutterable terror and confusion of the whole lecture, he said, in a loud voice:

"Those two Evanses and Maynard double-banked young Perkins in the play-ground one Saturday afternoon, when the fellows were bathing, and took his money from him. And they took nineteen pence half-penny, and all he ever got back was a shilling and a sixpence, and the shilling was bad."

"It was the same shilling we took from him," cried Roland, "and your fellows have double-banked ours a hundred times."

"What became of the three halfpence then," said old Mordaunt.

"They spent it in Banbury tarts," said young Mordaunt.

"There were no coppers at all," said Maynard. "And you can't get one Banbury tart under twopence. Now then, what do you think of that?"

The Dean again recovered himself.

"In the whole course of my experience, I never saw anything like this," he said. "I insist on perfect silence. You five Gloucester men will remain after lecture. I insist on silence. Mr. Jones, go on."

"Now we shall all get lines, and liberty stopped," said young Mordaunt, aloud, "and it was that young Evans began it."

"It was not," said young Evans, emphatically.

"*Will* you hold your tongue, sir," said the Dean, in a voice which they knew they must listen to. And so the lecture went on and was finished. When it was done, the five remained, and young Mordaunt whispered to old Evans, "He won't flog the lot."

The Dean begun on them: "Gentlemen, your Greek is excellent, but your conduct has not been good. My friend warned me that you were boisterous. I have no great objection to juvenile spirits—in fact, I like them; but I must most emphatically insist that you will not quarrel in my lecture. You no longer take rank as schoolboys: we give young men of your age brevet rank as men. I must request that this does not happen again."

Old Mordaunt shoved young Mordaunt, who shoved young Evans, who shoved Maynard, who shoved Roland Evans, by which he understood that *he* was to be spokesman. His speech

was so odd, so very simple, so very provincial, so full of the argot of a provincial school, that the Dean scarcely understood it. He said:

"Sir, we are very sorry to have offended you; for myself, I have always been dead against barneying in class, for the mere purpose of spinning out the pensum. I have also tried most consistently to make friends between doctors' boys and common-house boys, principally, I will allow, for the sake of the boats. But these jealousies do exist, sir, even among friends, as we are: I am sure all true friends. But these jealousies have existed for a long time, and are not likely to cease. I will take it on myself to say, sir, that they shall be stopped in class, and not carried into playground, and that we would rather, having begun so unluckily, be punished by task instead of by stoppage of liberty."

The Dean impatiently paced the room, and scratched his wig. "What the deuce," he said to himself, "am I to do with such boys as these? An Eton or Harrow boy would know more of things at fourteen. Why does K. keep his boys back like this? they are as innocent as children. I never saw such a thing in my life; they fancy they are to be punished. Hang it all, let me see how green they are. Mr. Evans, how old are you?"

"Nineteen, sir."

"You have behaved very badly. Suppose I was to cane one of you."

"We understood, sir," said Roland, "that we could not be caned after we came here. If, however, you decide on that course, the only one you could cane would be my brother. No boy is ever caned over eighteen, and my brother is only seventeen."

"And it would be no use caning him!" exclaimed the irrepressible young Mordaunt; "he has been caned a dozen times for laughing in chapel. And last half I tried him to see whether he had got over it. I showed him a halfpenny in Litany, and he went off, and was took out, and caned."

"I would gladly, sir," said Ronald, "take my brother's punishment on myself; but being over eighteen, I cannot, and should, in fact, resist; it would be almost cowardly, sir, to put the fault of all of us on my brother."

"Do go to Bath, and keep me from Bedlam!" exclaimed the irritated Dean.

And they fled off, and apparently had a free fight on the stairs; for as the Dean put it, sixteen out of the five seemed to tumble down instead of walking down.

"This is K. all over," he said to himself, when they were gone; "this is his system; sending his boys up here babies instead of men. I wish he had sent them to Balliol,—I wish he had sent them to Jericho. I have no stand-point with them. I can't get at them. They are a noble lot; but they are five years too young. And this hotbed of sin! Come in!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THERE seemed some difficulty about the person who knocked at the door coming in, as indeed there was. There was a curious pegging sound, then a gentle turning at the door-handle, and then a heavy fall. The Dean dashed out, and found a little cripple lying on his back on the landing, laughing.

"I shall do it once too often," said the cripple. "My servant puts me into bed, but I direct my energies to tumbling out of it. I live in the gate which is called Beautiful, and am happy there; but St. John and St. Paul are in heaven and have never said to me, 'What we have, we give thee.' Will you help up a poor little cripple, and set him on his legs, and give him his crutch, Dean? Be St. John to me, Dean."

"Sir Jasper Meredith!" exclaimed the Dean.

"I thought I should creep so nicely up, and I came one stair at a time. And I made fair weather of it until I tried to turn the handle, and then I lost my balance, and fell on my back."

The Dean had never seen anything like this. He was a man of the cloister, and had heard of human ills, and of baronets with 16,000 acres, and of cripples also. But to find a feeble cripple, with 14,000 acres, flat on his back before his own door, on the landing, was a sensation for the good Dean. "And he is from Shropshire also," he considered. "Shropshire will do for us in time."

He picked the little cripple up very carefully, and brought him in. "What can I do for you, Meredith?" he said, gently.

"Give me leave to get my breath, my dear sir," began the little man. "Thank ye. Ho! that's better. I can't get on anyhow. The doctors say that it is my spine, and I say it's my legs, and I expect that I know as much about it as they do. My legs have separate individualities; in fact I have named them differently—Libs and Auster—and they always want to go in different directions, which brings me to grief—don't you see? I suppose you have never noticed the same thing with regard to *your* legs, for instance, have you?"

"No," said the Dean, glancing complacently at his well-formed legs. "I never experienced anything of that kind—lately."

"No," said Meredith; "your legs do look like a pair. Now mine, you will perceive, if you will do me the goodness to look at them, most distinctly are not."

"You are certainly afflicted," said the kind Dean, "and I am sorry for it."

"We will speak of that on some future occasion," said the little man. "I am not at all sure that *I* am. Being afflicted in this manner, do you see, brings you so many kind friends, and such sympathy, that I am not sure that I would change it even to be Roland Evans. Well, that is not what I came to speak about. I came on a matter of business, and I am taking up your valuable time in talking of myself. Cripples *will* talk about themselves, you know."

"My time is yours, Meredith," said the Dean, pleased by the kindly little ways of the cripple.

"Now that is very kind of you. May I take a liberty? I have been a petted boy, and am used to take liberties. May I have one little sprig of that Wustaria which is hanging your window with imperial purple? I half live in flowers, Dean. They are the purest forms of mere physical beauty which can be brought to me, and I cannot travel in search of beauty, you know."

The Dean got him one at once, saying, "There is one form of physical beauty which comes to you very often, I fancy—Roland Evans."

"Yes," said Meredith; "I believe that he *is* very beautiful. But I, for my part, having known him so long, have lost the power of seeing *that*. If he were a cripple, or a leper, it would make no difference to *me*."

"You like him, then?" said the Dean.

Meredith laughed quietly, and very absently, looking at the carpet.

"The brain is always affected in these spine-diseases," said the Dean to himself. "The poor little fellow is woolgathering."

Then he added, emphatically. "We were speaking of Roland Evans, Sir Jasper Meredith. You like him, do you not?"

In an instant one of the keenest, shrewdest faces he had ever seen was turned up on his, and he stood astounded.

"Like him!" said the cripple. "Yes, I like him very much indeed. You know that you yourself would like a

noble young man like that (supposing that you were a cripple, which you are not) who left habitually his own amusements, in which he excelled, to attend to you; who could put you in the best place to see his innings at cricket, and come running to you after a race to tell you about it. You would like such a man as that, would you not?"

The Dean, interested, said, "Yes!"

"Ah! So I like him. And, in a similar way, I like his sister, who is Viola to Sebastian. And I like the whole lot of them—the two Mordaunts, Maynard, and Eddy Evans. They are all good. I came here on a point with regard to them. I am afraid they have been behaving very badly?"

"They have been quarrelling so dreadfully," said the Dean.

"They always do in class," said Meredith. "It is an old Gloucester dodge for spinning out the work, if one of the set has not got up enough lines."

"If that is the case," said the Dean, angrily, "I must request you to tell your friends that I will not suffer it again."

"It will not happen again," said Meredith. "They thought—I declare they did—that you would set them impositions. They are on their honour now."

"They are an extraordinary lot of greenhorns."

"They are," said Meredith, "with the exception of shrewd old Mordaunt. I suppose you know that none of them have ever been to London."

"*I* know nothing about them," said the Dean, "except that K. sent them here. I never saw such an extraordinary lot of fellows in my life. But you must tell them that I will not stand disturbances in lecture-time. You said that you came here to speak to me about them."

"True," said Meredith. "I ought to have had notice to quit before. I will do my business. The butler tells me that, as a fellow-commoner, I must sit at the high table with you. Do relax your rule, and let me sit at the Freshman's table, with the Evanses and the Mordaunts. They help me in a hundred ways. Do let a poor cripple have his dinner among his kind at the Freshman's table."

"Your request is granted, certainly," said the Dean, laughing. "But you must tell your friends not to be so turbulent. We were told last night that the younger Mordaunt and the younger Evans fought for a plate of meat, which both claimed, and were fined by the senior man at the table."

"My groom told me this morning," said Meredith, quietly, "that the Bible Clerk had sneaked. Young Evans certainly ordered the chicken, but then young Mordaunt, as senior boy, considered that he had a right to change dinners, not liking his mutton when he saw it. I am sorry they fought over it, but boys *will* fight over their victuals, you know. I dare say you have done it yourself."

There rose suddenly on the mind of the Dean the ghost of a certain Bath bun which he had struggled for at a certain lodge at a certain school nearly twenty years before, and which had ended in a great fight in the playground with a certain great general, who was just now engaged in the reduction of Sebastopol. The Dean had the best of it, as did not the general.

"But," said he, "they behave like schoolboys. They are ranked as men here."

"They were schoolboys yesterday, and are schoolboys still," said Meredith. "It rests with you to make them men. What sort of men you are going to make of them, is more in your line of business than mine. Lord help you through it! for they are a rough lot. It rests with you to take up Dr. K.'s work where he left off. He has sent them here in trust to you."

CHAPTER IX.

PULVERBATCH.

PULVERBATCH, one would think, was (at least in the old coaching days) as far, intellectually speaking, from anywhere, as any place could be. It was even out of the then road from Shrewsbury to Ludlow; one would have thought a very quiet road; and was intensely sleepy.

The Grange, Miss Eleanor Evans' inalienable property, was a heavy old grange, with an actual moat, in which Miss Eleanor lived as a Mariana, though with a difference. There were eight hundred acres of fat meadow and corn-land around it, washed down from Caradoc, Lawley, and Longmynd; every acre of which this strenuous lady held in her own hands.

When she took possession of it, after the lapse of a bad tenant's lease, and announced her intention of farming it, her brother gave her a little good advice.

"It is worth two pounds an acre, Nell, even now, after Dell has scourged it so. £1,600 a year—I'll find you a good tenant at that."

"Thank you," she said, "but I am going to find a good tenant in myself."

"You will make a mess of it."

"Why?"

"Because you can't farm."

"Fiddledeedee," said Eleanor, "I have been bored to death with it all my life; I ought to know something about it by this time. And, besides, women are much sharper than men. Any one can farm; don't tell me. I will take my four thousand a year off that land, or I will know the reason why."

"My dear Eleanor," said her brother, "I know you to be shrewd and determined; I will allow that you have quite sufficient intellect to manage the property."

"That is to say, as much intellect as Dell, who has 780 acres of yours. Thank you, for I am very much obliged to you for comparing me with a tipsy, muddled, uneducated old man like him. Go on," said Eleanor.

"You are angry, my dear," said her brother, "but you must remember that farming is a second nature to him."

"What was his first?" she asked.

This was one of those pieces of pure nonsense which scatter men's nonsense. Squire Charles picked himself up as well as he could, and said, somewhat heavily:

"Supposing that you could actually get this farm in order, and get money's worth off it, you would be beaten at marketing."

"Why?" said Eleanor.

"Because, not being able to go to market yourself, you would have to

send your bailiff, who would cheat you."

"But I am not going to have any bailiff. And I am going to market my own self."

"The farmers will be too much for you," said Charles.

"Will they?" she said: "they must have had a sudden accession of brains then."

"Do you mean to tell me, Eleanor, that you are actually going into Shrewsbury market with samples of oats?"

"Certainly."

"It will be thought very odd, and some will say improper."

"I know nothing about your last epithet. With regard to oddity, now look round among the country families around us, and say whether or no there is not a queer story among even one of them. There is an odd story in our own family, Charles."

"You mean about me."

"I mean about you. But I want to finish about this farming business. I am going to do it. I pay rent to myself; I have quite as much knowledge of farming as Dell, and ten times his intellect; why should I not do well?"

"You will be beaten in market," said Charles.

"We will see about that," said Eleanor.

She certainly was right, for she "gave her mind to it," and became one of the best farmers and keenest marketers about. Her scourged land recovered, as if by magic. She had good years and bad years, but she made money and a good deal of it; as a very diligent and clever person, with no rent to pay, and over 700 acres of fine land, may do. As time went on, her brother saw that he was wrong, and he told her so; and added, "And you seem to be very happy, Eleanor."

"I am as happy as the day is long," she said. "I have no time to be otherwise. I am interested and amused all day long, in all weathers, and I have perfect health, and no cares. Women are frequently very great fools to marry."

"Yet it would be well to have another to care and work for," said Charles.

"I have got Eddy; he is my son, and I know he will be extravagant, and bring my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. I have spoilt him," she added, laughing, "therefore I must work and slave to meet his extravagance. As I have brewed, so must I bake: I have made my bed and I must lie on it, as regards him. I gave him a new watch last week."

"So I saw. I hope he did not ask for it?"

"Oh, no; he never asks for anything, only he looks so pretty when he is pleased, and he likes bright and glittering things. I must work and save for him."

"You will not save much with those new cottages," said her brother; "you ought never to lay one brick on another, till you see your way to a clear seven per cent, exclusive of bad debts; and you will never see three there."

"Say two and a half," said Eleanor, "but it pays me indirectly on my own estate. I have my labourers on my own ground, close to their work. What would you say of the wisdom of a slave-owner who made her niggers walk three miles to the cotton-grounds?"

"You will raise the rates."

"*I* don't care. Oh! by-the-bye, your head-keeper has been asking me whether he may rear some pheasants in my large spinney, and I have told him that I should like to catch him at it. Your partridges I will protect for you, but I won't have pheasants, rabbits, or hares: you have plenty of ground of your own, without bothering me."

Squire Charles laughed, and left her admiringly.

So she went on, busy, happy, quiet,

contented, until I regret that it becomes necessary to pick her up at the age of forty-four years, just at the time when that extraordinary set of boys, which I have previouly described, had begun their most eccentric career at St. Paul's College.

The Grange at Pulverbatch was like so many Shropshire houses, a place worthy a long summer-day's visit. It was a low stone house, shrouded in and darkened by great dense groves of elms. Sooner than touch one bough of which, Eleanor would have sold her watch; though she had very much spoilt the scenery of the valley, by slashing into her hedge-row timber elsewhere most unmercifully, and cutting down her hedges to the famishing point. I am not antiquarian enough to say who built it or why it was built, but Eleanor had chosen to get it into her head that it was built by a small country-gentleman, at the time, as she put it, "when the greatest of all Englishmen for all time, Oliver Cromwell, ruled the land, and had one Milton for his Poet-Laureate." A mild antiquarian, on one occasion, by way of making himself agreeable, told her in a mild voice that her house was formerly a religious house, a cell of the larger house of St. Lawrence at Stretton.

"It was nothing of the kind, sir," she answered, indignantly.

"I think you will find that I am right" said the mild man.

"I don't believe a word of it," said Eleanor. And the mild antiquarian said no more.

It was moated around on all sides, "for defence," she said; "carp-ponds" said the antiquarian; and this moat was part of her belief in the place.

There were carp in this moat, and although she was shrewd enough to prefer the splendid trout which came out of the stream running through her estate for her own eating, yet on state occasions she always, as a great treat, gave her guests these abominable masses of dry bones, out of the moat. They were to her as a haggis or a sheep's head is to a Scotchman. She used to send them to her neighbours, as rare compliments and presents. Well, she had few prejudices, and those were very innocent.

We shall see more of her kind, innocent, wise life as we go on: a little more about her house, and herself, and she will be sufficiently fully introduced.

I should think, from what I have observed, that almost the first ambition of every clever woman was to have a *room of her own*, a place where she was mistress, and could do as she pleased, (surely some clever female hand has said this before, though I cannot recollect where, but it is true). I have seen such rooms; I know at least two; and I guess that in these maiden bowers, women, whether poor or rich, symbolize their own souls, or the phases of them. I know a bower, hung with crude oil-sketches, and photographs of great pictures; again, I know another, full of saints, angels, and crucifixes. I suppose that every woman would have such a nest—alas! how few are able. Eleanor, however, had her nest, which most decidedly symbolized her pursuits.

Eleanor's nest was what her brother called the "dining-room," but what she would insist on calling, out of contradiction mainly, I think, "the best parlour." It was a dark wainscoted room, with a large stone-jambed bay-window at the end furthest from the door, in front of which her great library-table, with innumerable drawers, was placed, and by which the only available light was let into this wonderfully uncomfortable room. At this table she could look over her beloved moat, and write her letters. Here she received her men, and her poor folks; and here she sat one afternoon, soon after the boys had gone to St. Paul's, reading her letters and answering them.

She was in her usual riding-habit,

and had been on foot or on horseback since six o'clock in the morning. As the light from the only window fell upon her face, you could see that, although her complexion might have suffered (or been improved) by wind, weather and hard work, there was no doubt that she was still a singularly beautiful woman.

She had had all kinds of letters by that post, and she had read them, and laid them aside for answer. Mr. Sutton, of Reading, informed Miss Evans that he did not approve of such a large admixture of triticum in the grass-seed intended for soil washed from limestone hills, but had executed the order under Miss Evans's direction, and begged to inform her that the "Student" parsnip, from Cirencester, was well worth a trial. Barr and Sugden informed her that they would, if possible, execute her small order for 5,000 snowdrops, but that a regular customer had come down on them for 14,000, and they were at present uncertain. A neighbouring miller wrote to say that if she would thrash out at once, he would chance the four big ricks at 54 (to which she said, "I dare say"); under all of which there was a letter from her lawyer, telling her that the dispute about the old arrears, hanging on since Dell's time, was settled against her; and several begging-letters.

These were put aside for answering: *they* caused her no thought. It was the two she had just read which made her sit with her handsome head in the light, and really think. Let us look over her shoulder. The first was from young Allan Gray, the young man who was the son of the soldier Gray, and who, by natural laws, was nephew of Charles and Eleanor Evans, and cousin to Roland and Edward.

It ran thus:—

"MY DEAR MADAM,—I enclose you Mr. Secretary Cowell's receipt for the very noble donation to our poor little work. I know that the pleasure you had in giving it is even higher than is ours in receiving it; I am requested to thank you for it, madam, and I thank you accordingly. Mr. Taunton, one of our best helpers, offered prayer for you to-night, madam, in the general prayer, and by name. This I know will be gratifying to you."

("Well, and so it is," said Eleanor. "I am sure we all want it.")

"I wish, madam, that you could come and pay us a visit here, say when you come to the Cattle Show, at Christmas. I wish that such a shrewd and yet kind heart as yours could see what actual good we are doing among the misery and guilt around us.

"With deep reverence and gratitude, I remain, dear madam, your devoted servant, "ALLAN GRAY."

"Yes," said Eleanor, "You are a good boy, and a shrewd boy, and a grateful boy; but I doubt I can't like you. You would be glad to be rid of your obligations to me to-morrow. I ought to like you, but I can't."

She was a shrewd, hard woman, this Eleanor Evans; not given to show sentiment, yet, when she opened the next letter, she kissed it, and said, "My darling, now we will have *you*, after this Methodistical young prig. All the flowers in May are not so sweet as you, but you might write better, you know." The letter was from Eddy, and she read it with concentrated attention, weighing every word, this sensible and keen lady, going over the sentences three or four times to extract their meaning (of which there was but little). Don't laugh at her; a love as keen and pure as hers is not ridiculous. Perhaps Gray's letter was more sensible, but this boy's nonsense was infinitely dearer to her.

"DEAR AUNT NELL,—You know that in one of our delightful, confiden-

tial talks the other day, you, in laying down our mutual plans for the future, said that one day I must get a good wife, and come and live with you. You hinted that you would, in the case of such an event, make over the main part of your personal property to me; only reserving to yourself one single room. You remember the alacrity with which I fell into the arrangement, and the extreme anxiety I have always shown to carry out your wishes. Consequently, I have kept my weather-eye open for above a fortnight, and that, after long and painful consideration, I am able to declare myself suited for life.

"To a well-balanced mind, such as I believe mine to be (it is your look-out if it is not), wealth, position, nay even beauty itself, weigh as nothing in the balance in a choice of this kind, in comparison with solidity of character. Gain that and you gain everything. I have gained it.

"Of course I should not think of moving definitively in such an important matter as this without consulting you, my more than mother, to whom I owe so much. By-the-bye, this last remark reminds me that I may as well owe you a little more, while we are at it. Roland has boned all my money because young Mordaunt and I gave half-a-sovereign a-piece to a young man we found on the Trampington road, with scarcely shoes to his feet, just come out of Reading Hospital. So do send me some; make it a tenner, if you can; as much more as you like. I am sure that you must have thrashed out the three ricks by now, and must be in cash. Don't you hold your corn back in the way you do, raising the market on the poor. You thrash out, and send me a ten-pound note, and I'll bring you a present, if there is any of it left.

"I suppose this will be the first intimation you will have had of our splendid success. Roland has done a thing which is simply unequalled in history. To be continued in our next, provided you send the money.

"Yours lovingly,

"EDWARD EVANS.

"P.S.—I bought a squirrel of a cad in the meadow, who said it was tame. On calling it to our rooms, it bit me to the bone, and ran up the chimney. This is a wicked and ungrateful world. I doubt, I am already nigh weary of it."

Aunt Eleanor put this letter aside, and answered young Gray's first.

"MY DEAR MR. GRAY,—I must beg that in any future communications to me, you will omit mentioning any obligations which you conceive you still owe to me. Such obligations certainly existed at one time, but they exist no longer. I therefore request, sir, that they may be no longer mentioned between us.

"At my mother's desire, I did all I possibly could for you. You on your part have repaid me a thousand-fold, by turning out so well, and by leading such a blameless, godly, and, I hope, prosperous life as you are leading. What I did for you was from a sense of duty, and not on any sentimental grounds, for you and I never liked one another, which you know as well as I do, if you choose—(last three words erased). Consequently, my dear sir, now you have risen to your present honourable position, I must tell you that these continual protestations of gratitude towards a woman you always disliked are not good ton.

"It seems strange that two people so utterly separated as we are by every thought and every feeling should be engaged in the same work, that of ameliorating the condition of the poor. But it is so. If you wish to put *me* under obligations, you will show me how I can further assist you in your very noble work, and further how I can, in case of your requiring pecuniary help yourself,

assist you. I can admire you without liking you; and I am told by Mr. Cowell, whom I knew before you did, that you are decreasing your own income by these good works."

"ELEANOR EVANS."

When Allan Gray got this letter, he rose with set lips and walked up and down the room. "A bitter, bitter, hard, cruel woman," he said; "an insult in every tone of it. Well, if she can be bitter, I can be bitter too;" and so he sat down and wrote:—

"MADAM,—I very much regret that a few expressions of personal gratitude which, since your last letter are no longer felt, should have caused you such very deep annoyance. The cause being removed the effect will not reappear.

"With regard to my personal pecuniary matters, madam, they are in good order. With regard to the Refuge, send as much money to us as you possibly can. 'Sell all that thou hast,' if you like. With regard to our personal relations, madam, I can only say, as a man who never told a lie, that I respect and reverence you deeply.

"ALLAN GRAY."

"The fellow has got go, though," said Eleanor: "but a brimstone temper; well, we are rid of *him* for a time. I will send them some money, and go and see them."

Now we come to the answer to Eddy's letter, and the reply to *that*. A bitter, hard woman, was she, Master Gray? Bitter to you: bitter to one who showed her every day and all day that he disliked his obligations to her, but not a bitter woman, though shrewd of tongue, towards the world. Was she strong? certainly; as strong a woman as most. Was she weak? she was weaker than water to some few: to a very few. She could fight and beat her brother easily, and he was an "upstanding" man. Young Gray she could beat as the dust under her feet; yet he was as self-contained and as mentally powerful a young fellow as most; you will see that for yourselves. Yet where she loved she was utterly powerless. And among others she loved Eddy; nay, she loved him the dearest of them all.

Her brother went about with her on the subject of spoiling Eddy. He pointed out to her that her power over him was great, that her responsibilities with regard to him were great, and that she should not let him have his own way.

"I can't help it," she said.

"You, so strong-minded and energetic," said her brother, "allow yourself to be made a perfect fool of by that boy!"

"I tell you I can't help it," said Eleanor, somewhat emphatically.

"You should. You will spoil him," said her brother.

"I never spoilt you, at all events," flashed out Eleanor. And Squire Charles, with certain school-room reminiscences in his mind, was obliged to admit that she certainly never had.

Now, with the almost cruel, almost vulgar, tone of the answer to young Gray fresh in one's mind, let us turn to her answer to that bright little nephew of hers, Eddy Evans, and see whether or no there were not two sides to this woman:—

"DEAREST EDDY,—Your letter gives me the deepest interest. I congratulate you sincerely, my dear, in having found a partner for life. I go this afternoon to take the joyful intelligence to your father and mother, who will, no doubt, be made as happy as I am. Pray give my dearest love to your dear one, and say that I shall be happy to receive her on a visit as soon as she chooses, and to present her to her new father and mother-in-law.

"I think it of all things important that a person of a character so frivo-

lous and empty as yours, should early become imbued with a sense of responsibility, and on those grounds I am delighted that you have taken this important step.

"I have not thrashed-out yet; the steamer comes to-morrow; but I have found an odd ten pounds. Do get out of that foolish habit of giving your money away like a baby. You will probably hear from your father the day after to-morrow on the subject of your grand alliance.

"Write to me, and tell me what Roland has done, what 'your great success' is, and what share *you* had in it. I can quite understand that Roland has done something unexampled in history, for I believe Roland to be capable of anything; the only thing which puzzles me is that *you* should have had any hand in it. Write and explain. I will do anything at any time, my dear, to give you pleasure."

After a few pleasant days among her turnips and her beasts, during which she was observed to have very often a smile of amusement on her face, Aunt Eleanor got Eddy's reply.

"DEAR AUNT,—If you are willing to do anything to give me pleasure, you had better send another cheque for ten pounds (unless you like to make it twenty), because that gave me the deepest pleasure, as it did also to Jimmy Mordaunt. We have spent some of it in riot and dissipation, but have still some of it in hand. You have no idea of the temptations of this place, the facilities of credit, and the easiness with which young men, of my personal appearance and of my expectations, can raise money from the lenders, at ruinous interest. If I sent a son here, the first thing I should take care of would be that he was supplied with large sums of ready money, and so kept from all risk of temptation. Believe me that such is my experience.

"With regard to the young person of whom I spoke to you in my first letter (I never spoke to her), I doubt if she will do. She is a barmaid down the river. I don't think she will do; but, as you have told father, I will keep my eye on her, with a view of keeping her hanging over his head, and keeping him civil.

"We never were frivolous so long together before, aunt. Suppose we drop it; but this place is a perfect atmosphere of chaff. I don't like it half so well as the old place. *There*, between-whiles of racket and horse-play we were serious. Well, there is not much that is serious in what I am going to tell you, except that old Roland has suddenly become a kind of hero in the University. Roland is the first man who ever won the University sculls in his first term, and my share in the victory was running along the bank and howling at him.

"I need not remind you of the doctor's objections to our having Robert Coombes to Gloucester to teach us to row, and how his objections were overcome by our father and Mr. Mordaunt; at all events, as far as money went. The fruits of that teaching have come out now.

"The third day we were here, Roland and I went early in the day, before the others were on the river, and Roland began trying sculling boats at the principal place where they are let. He was a long time until he found one to suit him, and kept going up and down in front of the barges, trying one after another, and changing frequently, during which time I noticed that he was attracting the attention of the people who were standing by. At last he found one which he said he could feel, and sent a waterman and myself to the tow-path side, at which time I observed that the principal boat-proprietors, and at least a dozen other people, had crossed, and were standing about, or walking slowly down the tow-path.

"He kept us waiting for a long time, but at last he came raging down, bare-legged and bare-headed, at a racing pace; and I said to myself, 'I should like to see some of these University oars.' The waterman and I got our elbows up and went after him, and, as we went, I heard muttered exclamations of wonder and admiration. I felt as if I was the proprietor of a show.

"He went down to the starting-post and rowed over, steered by the waterman. As we neared the barges we found others running with us, and Roland rowing more splendidly every minute. His last rapid rush home was Imperial—with a large I.

"When he stopped, there was perfect silence among the boat-builders and watermen. They were bent, as I have understood, on business, and were none of them inclined to commit themselves. I said to the man—a most respectable tradesman, as rich as you, I believe—who had let the boat to us, 'My brother rows well for a Freshman.' 'I have not time to build him a boat, sir, but would earnestly beg him to use the one he is in, and not change.' I thought, of course, that he was afraid of our going to his rival over the water, till that rival came to me, and said: 'I should be glad of your custom, sir, but do urge your brother to stay in that boat. I have no boat in which he could show his form as well as in that. Beg him, sir, not to train down; it is only a fortnight to the race.'

"I was utterly puzzled at all this, and looked for Roland. He had locked his boat to a punt in front of the University barge, and was talking to Jasper Meredith, who lay in it on cushions. I hailed them, and they took me in. I told them what I had heard. Jasper answered:

"'I have been trying to persuade your brother from entering for the boat-race,' said he to me. 'His answer is that he will not run against these older men. I watched you two this morning, and crutched it down to follow you, and see Roland row—a thing which delights me—and I have few pleasures. And I have been here, and heard those cads making bets on our own Roland; discussing the points in his body, as if he were a horse—his legs, his arms, his chest, his thighs—nay, more, his manner of living, and his morality. All I can say is, that the whole business was unmeasurably indecent. Since the days of Commodus, there was never such a thing done as for Roland to go down into the arena. It is a pleasure to *me* to see him row, but if he had heard the expressions those cads used about him, he would never row again as long as he lived.'

"'You are looking only at one side of the question,' said Roland. 'I only match myself against another gentleman.'

"'Yes; but on what terms,' said Jasper. I heard one of them say, "If a cove could only persuade him to train, what a pot of money a fellow might put on." He did not say "fellow," but I spare your ears. And Roland has dropped to this!'

"Roland, laughing, said: 'I am not sure that I am going to row, and I don't think I am going to win. I only know that I am not going to bet.' And he shot away and left us.

"But he rowed and he won. He had infinitely the worst side, and Jimmy Mordaunt and I ran through the Meadows with punts over the ditches, to steer him. The thing was easily done. Roland rowed his man—a Henley winner—down, and after the first half mile, kept him working on his wash. Although he had scrupulously practised in public, few believed in him against the Henley winner, and the cheers were very slight. He came into the University barge, as did the other man, and they got locked together. Roland said: 'We cannot all win, sir.

I am sorry you have lost, but I am glad I have won.' The other man said: 'I give you my shoes, sir, and I think you will wear them well.' And then I took Roland out of his boat, and put the waterman in, and we stood alone on the barge.

"Not a soul knew us personally, and so not a soul would speak to us. We wanted to get the cup, but did not know whom to ask about it. We were not likely to speak to men who would not speak to us, and there we stood like fools. Roland, in breeches, with his legs bare (for these barbarians row in trousers). How long we should have stood I cannot say, but the President came, parting the throng, and made Roland's acquaintance.

"His influence here is so great that it broke the ice at once. He had actually called on us that morning, it seemed, which gave him the right of introducing us. So one happy result of the race is that we, with our charming manners, and our splendid personal appearance, have a new world opened to us. I was not aware, until I went to other colleges, that our college was a marked and disliked one; but it is. So much for Roland's boat-race.

"On the Meadows we picked up Jasper Meredith, and, strangely enough, the young man to whom I gave ten shillings, who is now one of his servants. 'For heaven's sake,' said Jasper, 'don't begin talking of the boat-race. I am sorry he has won. Give me the address of this man, if you know it. He is a friend of yours.' He wanted the address of Allan Gray, for what purpose I did not ask him. Send it to him, for I have not got it. He has moved.

CHAPTER X.

SEE Aunt Eleanor's writing-table in the bay-window once more, with a lady writing there—a lady, but not Aunt Eleanor. The light of the window fell, this time, on the head of the most delicate little fairy ever seen: on the head of the girl who had taken her aunt's place as the great Shropshire beauty: on the head of Mildred Evans.

The cross which the handsome Evans had made with the still more beautiful Meredith, had resulted in her, and she was very splendid indeed; very small, very fragile, very blonde, in every attitude graceful; yet not without a rather quick, decisive way of changing from one perfectly unstudied pose to another.

Without shadow; all light as morning; light in hair, light in sapphire eyes, light in her dress. She had dressed herself in white, and she had got a pink rose from the garden and put it in her hair, and she had got a red rose and put it in her bosom, and had put a geranium and rose in a glass vase before her, and thus fortified, had sat down, at our unsympathetic Aunt Eleanor's desk, to write her innocent little love-letter, which the reader will be glad to be spared.

She had just finished when the door was opened widely, and in came Aunt Eleanor, in a riding-habit, accompanied by a girl, also in a riding-habit, who looked exceedingly like Aunt Eleanor's ghost.

A very tall girl, with a singularly upstanding carriage, and a well-set-on head, covered with fine brown hair, combed back into a knot; a very fine girl, very large and strong, but not in the least coarse. Ethel Mordaunt, of whom her brothers used to say that she was the greatest brick in England, whom Squire Charles was apt to pronounce a trifle coarse at times, though never within his sister's hearing, and whom Aunt Eleanor pronounced to be a perfect lady, far too good to marry any one except Eddy.

This young lady, still holding her riding-skirt under her left arm, threw her whip on the table, and said:

"You are the best judge, Miss Evans,

being so much older and wiser than I am; but even a girl just out of the schoolroom has an opinion, and my opinion is that you allow your good-nature to be abused in countenancing these two women."

"I don't encourage them. Mrs. Gray is most respectable."

"Is she," said Miss Mordaunt; "ah, I dare say she is. But I don't like her for all that. I don't like the way she talks to my brothers, for instance, though, perhaps, my brothers may. She is both familiar and slangy."

"I don't know what you mean," said Aunt Eleanor. "Her grandson and herself were left in my care by my mother, and I have striven to do my duty by them; and slangy is not a nice word, Ethel."

"My brothers use it," said Ethel; "and then there is old Phillis Myrtle again."

"Mrs. Myrtle has her faults," said Aunt Eleanor; "but these are matters which you cannot understand."

"Papa says she is a tipsy old thing," said Miss Mordaunt. "Look here, Miss Evans, see if here is not our sweet little bird writing her love-letter, and dressed up in flowers to do so. What an innocent little love it is. Put it in strong, Milly, my love. Leave no doubt about the state of your sentiments, my dear. Don't let him have the slightest doubt of your mutual relations, and let me read it after."

"It is sealed up," said Mildred, turning round and laughing.

"What a pity!" said Miss Mordaunt. "I have seen a few of his, but I never saw one of yours. I should like to see one, because I don't know how I shall have to write to your brother Eddy, when he, driven to exasperation by your aunt here, proposes to me. Do you ever write to Eddy?"

"I am going to write now," said Mildred.

"Tell him that his aunt's heart is set on our union, and that if he will summon up the courage to propose, I will have him—conditionally. He must add a cubit to his stature, to begin with; and there are other conditions also. Will you write that for me? That, do you see, Miss Evans, will crown your kind plan."

"I have no plan, now," said Aunt Eleanor, and standing in her place, with her riding-skirt tucked up under her left arm, looked steadily at Miss Mordaunt, standing in her place, also in the same attitude, and also looking steadily at Aunt Eleanor. But as she returned Aunt Eleanor's stare, the veins in the girl's throat began to swell and throb, and a flush spread upwards over her face, until that face was scarlet. At which time, Aunt Eleanor went up and patted her on the shoulder, and said in her ear, "It was so with me once, my dear, long ago, long ago; that is the reason why I never married."

The girl said nothing, but Mildred Evans, turning round from the table, said, suddenly:

"I have got a letter also from Roland."

The blood fled back from Ethel Mordaunt's face as fast as it had come, and told the story full well—the story which Aunt Eleanor had nearly guessed that afternoon, during their ride. An old story and generally a sad one, of childish friendship ripening into love on the woman's part, but only into kindly, friendly indifference on the man's. "She loves him," thought Aunt Eleanor, "and *I* shall never prate her out of it. No one ever prated me out of it, even after I had her children on my knee. God help the poor child!"

Ethel Mordaunt had as well cut and well carved a head on her shoulders as had her brother James, whose carriage of his head has been before alluded to. This head was very nearly down on Aunt Eleanor's shoulder, but it was suddenly and im-

periously drawn up again, and turned towards the door: for a footman opened that door and said, "If you please, ma'am, here is Mrs. Gray and Mrs. Myrtle."

Every fibre of Ethel Mordaunt's body became rigid as these two women appeared. "Send beauty away," she said, almost imperiously, pointing with her head, negro fashion, to Mildred Evans. "It is not fit that she should breathe the atmosphere with these two."

Aunt Eleanor chuckled internally, but did not let her laughter show outwardly. "Mildred," she said, "would you kindly be so good as to go and see whether the—— I mean be so good as to go upstairs and look out of the window and see if——. But I cannot do it. Would you be so kind as to take yourself out of the way, my dear?"

"I can understand that, Aunt," said Mildred, laughing, and slid out of the room, with her precious letter in her hand, making two pretty little obeisances to Mrs. Gray and Mrs. Phillis Myrtle as she went out, which those good ladies returned with deep reverences.

"Now you go too," said Aunt Eleanor.

"I am going to stop where I am," said Ethel Mordaunt.

"What is not fit company for her is not fit company for you."

"Nevertheless I am going to stop where I am. I am clever, and wish to study character."

"You will go, if I tell you to go," said Aunt Eleanor.

"Of course; now have them in."

And they came in. Two very different-looking women, Mrs. Gray first. A tall old woman, with the remains of a certain kind of aquiline beauty, very upright in her carriage, and an expression in her face—a look of cool, careless impudence, which might either take the form of contemptuous badinage, or of utter scorn. She was very well dressed, and in good material; but her whole appearance, striking as it was, was utterly repugnant both to Eleanor and Miss Mordaunt, for different reasons.

Phillis Myrtle was an utterly different person. A little round-about old lady, with an apple face and a perpetual smile. To Eleanor she was possibly more repugnant than Mrs. Gray.

It was natural that these two women should be utterly repugnant to her, even if they had been the most estimable characters in the world. These two women were the only two left who knew of, or cared to remember, her brother Charles's escapade with Elsie Gray. It was a secret between them, though it was never mentioned at all: neither of the three knew how much the other knew. Who knew most, we shall see.

It was a life-long annoyance for a very high-souled woman, impatient of control, to keep this secret with two such women; yet it had to be kept, for these women had the power of annoying her brother seriously. Squire Charles had done well by Mrs. Gray. She lived in a cottage rent-free, and had a fixed allowance, but the cottage was Eleanor's, and the allowance was paid by Eleanor's hand. Once, and once only, had the Squire spoken to Mrs. Gray after his return from India, and that was to say, "Mrs. Gray, our more recent intercourse was a very sad one; I think that the wisest thing we can do is to forget one another." And Mrs. Gray said, "Your honour shall be obeyed." Nothing more; and had accepted her position quite quietly, merely curtsying to the Squire when they met. Here she was now with old Phillis Myrtle, the nurse, staring fixedly and boldly at Miss Mordaunt, as if she was weighing or appraising her, and here was Miss Mordaunt looking out of window in-

stead of returning her gaze, and drumming with her horse-whip.

"I am afraid I have kept you waiting," began Eleanor.

"Not at all, miss; I have been accustomed to wait on gentlefolks all my life, and my husband's family have been vassals to yours for centuries. Coming from the manufacturing counties as I do, this vassalage seemed strange at first, but I have got used to it. The world uses you well, Miss Eleanor, and I hope it will use you as well, Miss Mordaunt, when you are as old as Miss Eleanor. Why, miss, you are three-and-forty; you must think of marrying soon."

"I am sorry to say that I *am* three-and-forty, my good Gray; and as for thinking of marrying, I have thought of that all my life, and the more I think of it, the less I like it."

It was so good-humoredly said that Mrs. Gray smiled a gaunt smile, and continued the conversation with Miss Mordaunt, who, by-the-bye, had not said one word.

"You will poison Miss Mordaunt's mind against marriage, Miss Eleanor." She went on audaciously. Beauty like hers should not go unsued. Mordaunts and Evanses must not fail in the land; beauty, worth, valour, perfect openness, and perfect truth, are too good qualities to be lost in the land; and where are they to be found unless among Mordaunts and Evanses? Ah! we may see Miss Mordaunt mistress of Stretton yet. Whereupon Miss Ethel, with her crest in the air, marched out of the room, with her riding-habit under her arm, and a look of high, cool, unutterable contempt on her face. "I will come back, Miss Evans, when this woman is gone," she said; but she might have gone up-stairs without bruising her clenched hand against the banisters.

"Mrs. Gray," said Eleanor, angrily, "you are taking great liberties."

"Only with a Mordaunt. I love it; I love to make one of those snake-headed Mordaunts put their heads in the air, like an adder just before he strikes; I do it with the boys. They are a red-handed old lot. Why, that youngest one, Jimmy, *her* brother, nigh tortured your own nephew, Edward, to death at school, that *you* know. Mad love and bitter hate. I love to play with a Mordaunt. Ha! ha!"

"I'll trouble you not to play with an Evans, if you please," said Eleanor, calmly furious.

"No! no! not with a she-Evans. They get their stuff from the Merediths. Do you remember your mother? Ah! to see her bare-headed, with her hands held up over her head —well, don't look like that. She was a Meredith, and so are you; your brother is an Evans. All the men-Evanses are soft; you can do anything with 'em you like, except resist them when they plead. Your brother took two of my sons to Waterloo, and only brought back one. They would have gone to the devil after him—and then—why, and then another man-Evans, your nephew Edward, kisses you, strokes your hair, calls you his foolish old woman, and makes you, a woman of spirit, do just as he pleases. And he will live to break your heart as his father broke mine. You wait till you are old, and see him spending your hard-earned money on them that will despise you. Wait till you see him getting impatient for your death, and then remember my words."

Aunt Eleanor rose. "Now look here, Mrs. Gray, and have the goodness to attend to me. I am not going to have this, or anything in the remotest degree approaching to it, for one instant. Go out!"

"You had better hear my errand first."

"I will not speak to you. Go out!"

"You may get your servants to turn me out if you like," began Mrs. Gray.

"I shall not get my servants to do

it, I shall do it myself in less than half a minute," said Aunt Eleanor. And as she rose she looked so extremely like doing it, that Mrs. Gray turned round, not one bit abashed, and broke into a loud laugh.

"I'll go," she said; "and I'll hold my tongue, too. This woman will tell you what we came about. There is no bad blood between us, Eleanor; I like you the better for your anger." And she was gone.

"The old *witch*," said Aunt Eleanor, dropping back in her chair. "For her to have dared ——"

A low sigh, and a dropping, or rather dribbling, of honey-sweet words reminded her that Phillis Myrtle was still seated in the easiest of easy-chairs, rolling her head from one side to the other, and using her pocket-kerchief.

"You may well say dared, my dear young lady," began Mrs. Myrtle: "audacious as dear Mrs. Gray can be, I never thought she'd have burst out on this day of all days in the year. And witch you may well say, Miss Eleanor: witch she would be if she could, for I have watched her. But it ain't biling things in a pipkin as makes a witch—no, my dear, Lord forbid! If she has asked me for black spells once, she has asked me a dozen times, and I replied to her, 'Mrs. Gray, I don't use them: I am old, and I think of my soul!' And she had said to me, 'But, you fool, you know them,' as, heaven help me, I do. And I have set her off with white spells,* for bunions and king's evil. But now she is going for good and all, and how her pious grandson will like it, I can't say.

"Going, what do you mean?" said Eleanor.

"As I was saying, my dear young lady, she comes to me, and she says, 'You half-hearted witch,' she says, 'he will have you all the same, if you won't give me a black spell. If you won't let me make acquaintance with your master, at all events give me a white one. And I said I would do anything neighbourly, not against my conscience, only that I should want a new crown-piece. Then she told me what she wanted. She says, in her own words, 'I want a love-spell. That girl Ethel Mordaunt is in love with young Roland Evans, for I have watched them, and he don't care for her. And I want something to put in his wine, or his drink, to make him love her; for there will be mischief afoot if he marries her before they have studied one another's character. They will fight for the mastery, and there will be your master to pay.' And I gave her some dill-water, and she put it in his drink."

Eleanor groaned. The secret she had found out that day was known to this terrible Mrs. Gray, and how many others.

"Therefore, my dear young lady, it is as well that she goes away. It is indeed."

"Is she going away?"

"Her grandson has offered her a home in London, my dear young lady, and she goes to him, and a nice mess they will make of it together."

"Did you two come here to tell me of this to-day?" asked Eleanor.

"Yes, my dear lady, partly. And partly to ask if I might have her cottage. There is no one but us two knows anything, and no one but I and yourself, and your dear mother, now in glory, and the squire as knows a certain part of the truth; and there is no one but my own self knows the whole and entire truth. *She* thinks she does, but she don't. The Lord help you, if she did."

"What do you mean by the whole truth, Mrs. Myrtle?" said Eleanor.

"Parcelling all together," said Mrs.

* All this is going on in the present day, and there are educated men who believe that Mr. Home was carried round the ceiling of the room.

Myrtle. "Not parts and parcels, but the whole biling."

"Well," said Aunt Eleanor, rubbing her nose, "I suppose you had better have the cottage rent-free. I need not mince matters with you. It is of great importance that my brother's first marriage should not be talked of——"

That silly old trot, Phillis Myrtle, was down on her knees before her in an instant. "She don't know of that, my lady. Oh! for heaven's sake keep it from her for ever."

"Does she believe my brother a villain, then?" said Eleanor, indignantly.

"Oh! let her believe so, my lady. Oh! for the sake of the mother that bore you, and the brother you love, let her believe so. Listen to me, a foolish old woman. Think of what her claims would be if she knew it; and nobody knows *that* much but you and I—no one alive. Think, dear Miss Eleanor, what would be the effect of bringing it up now—how Squire Charles had made a shameful marriage in Scotland over the broomstick, but legal. Think of what Madam Evans would say when she found it had been kept from her. Think of the effect on the boys. Think of my darling Roland, whom I nursed, how his head would be bowed; and think of your poor little Eddy. Think of him, miss. Don't let that woman think there was a marriage. You have concealed before. Go on concealing: it is no new sin. Think of Eddy, miss."

"You plead well," said Aunt Eleanor. "I think you are an affectionate woman, though you must own yourself to be a great fool. Will that woman, Gray, speak, think you?"

"No, my lady; she is too proud; and she don't know all. I did not think you knew as much as you did. I thought you thought as she thought. But I am the only one that knows all, Leave well alone, my lady."

"Leave ill alone, you mean. Well, I suppose I had better. You can have the cottage."

"Well, aunt," said Mildred, coming in, with her arm round Ethel's waist, "are the two wretches gone?"

"Don't talk to me for a time, you two. Kiss, play, fall in love, quarrel, do anything you like, but never give yourselves to a deceit. It will grow out of a little lie, like the thin clouds of summer, darkening and darkening till it breaks, in ruin and confusion."

CHAPTER XI.

STRETTON Castle lay on the north side of the valley, under Longmynd; Mordaunt Royal lay upon the south side, nearly facing it, with Caradoc at its back.

When the Evanses and the Mordaunts first came into that part of the country, and began quarrelling, is lost in the mists of antiquity. All down through the history of the county, however, you will find that the Evanses and the Mordaunts did nothing but squabble, and now and then intermarry, mainly for the purpose of patching up a worse quarrel than usual. There was, however, generally such a furious hurly-burly about marriage settlements, dower lands, appanages, and so forth, that the remedy had been found to be worse than the disease, and had been tacitly abandoned. These disputes had been settled with lance in the tilting-ground, with rapier in the meadow, and with red tape in Chancery; but at last the old jealousies and disputes had died out, and they were exceedingly good friends. The last case of enmity between the houses was when James Mordaunt so shamefully bullied Eddy Evans at Gloucester. Even that was past and gone now.

In the great civil war, the then Evans had declared for Parliament—and, of course, the then Mordaunt for King. This was a very pretty quarrel, indeed,

and the great statesman tried to utilize it; not knowing, as the Maynards and Merediths, or any Shropshire folks, could have told him, that the Evanses and Mordaunts only quarrelled between themselves, and that, in case of an Evans or a Mordaunt being assailed in any way by an outsider (even a Maynard or a Meredith), the other family would at once fly to the rescue, and defy creation. Consequently, during the Revolution the Evans of those times did nothing more than watch his pestilent neighbour, Mordaunt; and during the Restoration, Mordaunt did nothing more than go bail for his traitorous neighbour, Evans. Obligations in this way were mutual; and what is more to the purpose, they both kept their lands under their feet, their heads on their shoulders, and what concerns us most, their houses over their heads.

So that now, as of old, Stretton stood a little up the hill—a long mass of dark grey, blazing with roses, with an oak wood behind it, and sheets of moorland rising behind; while before it, the deer-park stooped down, like a cascade of green turf, into the valley, unaltered since the time of Henry VII. For a similar reason, the dark red-brick, James the First house of Mordaunt, buried among its dense elms and oaks, on the other side of the valley, kept its form unaltered through all political changes.

Either house, or either estate, were possessions which, to poor folks, seem almost fabulous. Yet there are thousands as good, or much better, to be seen anywhere. One of my neighbours, a commoner, has £20,000 a year; another, just in sight, has £60,000; n other, also a commoner, within four miles, has just died worth £5,000,000. The figures, with regard to the Evans and the Mordaunt properties, drop terribly from these real, every-day sums. Mr. Mordaunt was reputed to have about £7,000 a year, and Squire Charles Evans £8,000. We have only to do with the last estate, and I only mention figures to show that it was a very desirable one for a moderate man. Though not by any means as good as the "New York Herald," and but little better than Mr. Ward Beecher's church, it was worth fighting for.

There was a pleasant, orderly luxury about the place which was extremely agreeable, and was rather wonderful to contemplate, when one considered the beggarly income. It is perfectly certain that Charles Evans could never have done what he did with his limited means, but for one thing: he never went to London, except to lodgings, and Mrs. Evans did not dress.

But he did everything else. To begin with, he sat in Parliament, for one thing, three elections, which somewhat took the gloss off his income; and then he sat a fourth at a greater expense than before—an expense which made even he open his eyes, and brought in a furious remonstrance from Eleanor. He sat, I say, a fourth time, for three weeks, after which time he was unseated in a scandalous manner. There was no doubt at all about it. Outraged Britannia held up her hands in sheer horror; and six thousand odd of good money gone to the bad for nothing! After this, Charles Evans retired into private life, cursing his attorney, consoling himself with the fact that "the other fellow" had spent more money than he had, and so let public affairs go to the deuce as they liked.

Consequently, although he kept the hounds at his own expense, his estate was not injured in any way. Hounds can be kept very well for £2,000 a year; and he kept them till he made the brilliant discovery that you could get as much sport out of them if you let some one else keep them, and only gallop after them yourself. So he gave up his hounds.

Then he bred race-horses, and, indeed, he won the Oaks, to Eleanor's intense exasperation. "Now we *are*

done for," she said; "this is the finish and end of us at last." But she was deceived. Charles bred a colt, such a colt as was never seen, and he, a consummate horseman, taught one of his stable-boys to ride it, and he won the Two Thousand,* and Eleanor gave the house up for lost; but no. He came back to her the next day, very quietly, and told her that he had sold his horse, with its engagements, for £5,000, and had netted £14,000 in bets. "You are not going on then," she said. "No," he answered; "it is so slow."

Sailing-yachts eat nothing, and so his yachting cost him little. And now that his Parliamentary career was done with and finished, his sole dissipation was his yacht at Aberystwith. His was a most desirable property, perfectly unencumbered, all ready for Roland, who seemed to be worthy of it.

Most worthy. The good doctor's estimate of his character was being confirmed day by day. The Dean had gone out of his way to write to Squire Evans about his two sons: they were both of them patterns (in spite of a slight tendency to boisterousness), but Roland was a paragon. The schools, and consequently the world, were at his feet—he might do anything—there was never anything like him. Old Mordaunt wrote to his father: "Roly Evans has won the University sculls, and has made a blazes fine speech at the Union. *I* heard it. There ain't a man to hold a candle to him here. He is getting petted and flattered; but I don't think they will spoil him."

Jim Mordaunt also wrote to his sister. I hardly know why, but I feel as if I was violating confidence in writing down what he wrote. It ran thus:—

"*He* has done a thing five hundred times greater than winning the University sculls—for my part I hate to see him rowing. The question before the house was the Eastern war, and the ultra-radicals were against it; and Roland got on his legs, on the Liberal side, and did so cast about his beautiful, furious words about national death and national dishonour, that he carried the house with him. You should have seen the way he raised his head and sent the well-thought-out syllogisms rattling through his white teeth: it was a sight! Johnny says that his logic was all fishy in the major term, and that his whole argument was bosh; but you know Johnny. As for me, I would sooner hear Roland's buncombe than any one else's common sense. So would you, my sister. They are all flattering him, but they will never spoil him. I got up a fight with him and his brother to-night. Pretending to cut Eddy's hair, while I was flourishing the scissors, I got the enclosed off *his* head. He is in an awful wax with me, for he has missed his curl: he little dreams where it has gone. Mind you never, under *any circumstances*, let him see it: he would never forgive me."

So after their successful two first terms they all came back, full of hope, health, and high spirits, to their two beautiful homes. I suspect, that of all the men in the world, a young English country gentleman, of good name, of good repute, of tolerable intelligence, with good health, and of innocent life, has more chance of happiness than any other. Most human cares are impossible for him; he has plenty to do, plenty to think about, and his work is all laid ready to his hand. I cannot conceive of any man of finer chances than a rich young squire—the world and its temptations seem put out of the way in his case; yet he frequently makes a fearful fiasco of it too.

There was no blot on the prospects of the young Mordaunts or the young

* The Caractacus Derby is an exact parallel.

Evanses on the morning after their arrival home, any more than there was a cloud in the June sky, which stretched overhead a sheet of glorious, cloudless blue. All possibilities of any disturbing causes seemed absolute nonsense. The chances were so infinitely in their favour. Money was to be had for the picking up; they had talents, prospects, health, high spirits; the world was theirs, in a way, if they cared to go into it and succeed; or if they failed, here were two homes of ancient peace ready for them to come back to. Misfortune, thanks to settled old order, seemed in their cases to have become impossible.

The Mordaunts had come over to breakfast with the Evanses, and Maynard was spending the first part of his vacation with them, for the purpose of being with his beloved Mildred Evans. Aunt Eleanor had come from Pulverbatch to see her darling Eddy; and so they were all assembled in the morning room at Stretton.

Aunt Eleanor was the first person who sauntered out through the open window into the bright, blazing sun. The boys stayed behind eating more, and yet more, of marmalade and honey, and the others sat because they were contented, until at last Eddy cried out, "There is Aunt Eleanor having a row with Deacon Macdingaway;" and indeed, Aunt Eleanor's usual expletive, "Fiddledeedee," was plainly borne to the ears of the assembled company.

"Let's go and hear the fun, you fellows," said the younger Mordaunt—a proposition which, as it stood, was innocent enough, but might have been carried out with less boisterousness. They need not all of them have rushed to the window at once. Likewise, there was no necessity of a free fight between Eddy Evans and young Mordaunt, which ended in Eddy being cast on his back in the middle of a bed of geraniums, with young Mordaunt atop of him. However, they soon were beside Aunt Eleanor, determined to back her through thick and thin against Deacon Macdingaway. With which heed the younger Mordaunt, on arriving at the scene of action, by way of taking up a formidable position, said to Macdingaway, "She did nothing of the kind."

Macdingaway was the head Scotch gardener, who, in an evil moment for him, had confessed to one of these madcaps that he had held an office in his church, after which they had christened him "Deacon." He turned on young Mordaunt and said, "Her ladyship threepit——"

"That I emphatically deny," struck in Eddy, who had got his breath.

"Her ladyship threepit that the roses should no have been budded till the first week in July," said the inexorable Macdingaway. "And I took the liberty to disagree with her."

"That alters the case altogether, of course," said Eddy. "You are quite right, Deacon. Aunt, you have not got a leg to stand on, you know. You had better leave him alone: he has much the best of the argument. Here are the others; let us come to them."

As they went away from him, old Macdingaway shook his clever old head. "A' folly together," he said. "If your father had na lived before ye, where would ye be?"

All the others were now standing on the terrace. Squire Charles Evans, a handsome man of fifty, in a short velvet coat, perfectly cut trousers, and well-made lace-up boots; very grey, with slight grey whiskers and moustache. Squire Mordaunt, a full-necked, brown-faced, thickset man, without a hair on his face, in grey breeches and gaiters, with a grey shooting-coat. He was a very bucolic-looking man, this Squire Mordaunt, but he had a shrewd deep-set eye under his heavy eyebrows too. He stood looking at the group as they approached, with his head thrust forward, and his hands,

holding a whip (for he had ridden over), behind his back, and he was the first who spoke.

"What new trouble has my friend Miss Evans been getting into?" he asked, in a rather grating voice. "She seems to be borne back in triumph from some new victory by these four foolish boys."

"Nothing but a dispute with my dear friend and admirer, Macdingaway, George Mordaunt," she replied, with her head in the air; "nothing worse than that *this* time."

"I am glad of that," said Squire Mordaunt. "Edward, you can come out of your aunt's pocket. My dear Miss Evans, once more, will you let me have that right of way through your two orchards for watering my horses at Gweline Farm?"

"No, I won't," said Aunt Eleanor, with a dangerous look in her face, Stroking Edward's bare curls, who, although he was not in her pocket, was certainly leaning idly against her. "No, I won't."

"But why not, my dear Miss Evans?" said Squire Mordaunt.

"Because *you* ask me, and because you ask me with that look in your face. I would sooner let every gipsy on the country-side camp there than let one of your dogs through, if you look at me like that, and ask me like that, now then! What do you think of that, for instance?"

The other boys had heard nothing of this; but Mrs. Evans, who was *en passant* a pretty woman, and Mrs. Mordaunt, who was not pretty, but very clever, interposed.

"Surely," said Mrs. Mordaunt, "I shall have to quote Dame Quickly on you two some day. You cannot serve heaven well, that you never come together without quarrelling. Do be quiet."

"A wilful woman must have her way," said Squire Mordaunt.

"And indeed she must," said Aunt Eleanor; "you never said a true word than that. I am going after the boys."

Young Maynard and Mildred Evans had marched off, and were courting somewhere or another; there remained only the four boys and Ethel Mordaunt, who were standing together, and apparently all talking at once. The Mordaunts, with the exception of Mrs. Mordaunt, had ridden over, and so Ethel Mordaunt was in her riding-habit, though bare-headed. Aunt Eleanor, as she approached them, heard that the four boys were discussing what they would do with themselves on this happy summer's day, and saw that Ethel was listening to them: she, also in her riding-habit and bare-headed, stooped and pretended to weed one of Macdingaway's well-weeded flower-beds.

"I vote," said young Eddy, "that we ride into Shrewsbury, have ices, and see the boats go. And we might buy a piece of salmon, and Jimmy Mordaunt might bring it home in his pocket."

"I wouldn't be a fool if I was in your place," said the younger Mordaunt. "You have had plenty of opportunities of eating yourself blind at the University; and I am sure we have had boating enough."

"Let us go fish," said the elder Mordaunt. "What do you say, Roland?"

"It is too bright for fishing, Johnny," said Roland; "I'll tell you what *I* should be inclined to propose. Let us take Rory, our old Irish pointer, and ride away over the Longmynd and see what grouse there are. What do you think, Ethel?"

"I think that would be very pleasant," said Ethel.

"It is certainly an improvement on Eddy's proposal of eating *ices in* Shrewsbury, and also an improvement on Johnny's equally idiotic idea of going fishing. I am for it," said young Mordaunt.

"Do you think, Johnny," said Ethel to her elder brother—"Do you think that *I* might come?"

"*No*," shouted young Mordaunt; "we don't want a parcel of girls with us."

Young Mordaunt had said this in sheer recklessness, expecting that his sister, as her wont was, would have given it to him. He was rather astonished, and very much ashamed, when his imperial sister turned gently to him and said:

"I won't be much in your way, Jimmy. I can ride as far and as fast as any of you. And you two have been a weary while away; let me see something of you now. Let me come, Jimmy."

"I believe," said young Mordaunt, impetuously, "that I am the greatest brute on earth; of course you are to come. I shouldn't go if you didn't. Come on, you fellows, and let us get the horses." And away they all went towards the stables.

And Ethel following, passed Aunt Eleanor, pretending to weed a flower-bed, and Aunt Eleanor said:

"So you are bent on going with him then?"

And Ethel said, "I can't help it. One long summer's day beside him is not much to ask out of all eternity."

Aunt Eleanor said, "You are binding a burden for your back which you will find hard to carry before you have done with it. *I* know, and your father knows too: though he might have kept his tongue between his teeth this blessed day. Are you bent on going?"

"Oh yes, Miss Evans. Let me go!"

"I am not stopping you. Which way are you going to ride?"

"Over Longmynd, to look at the grouse."

"And so on to Maynard Barton to lunch," rejoined Aunt Eleanor. "Go, by all means."

"They said nothing of Maynard Barton," said Ethel. "We shall hardly get so far."

"You foolish child," said Aunt Eleanor. "Why, if you had set out this day to ride over Caradoc or Lawley, if you had set out to ride to the top of the Wrekin, your destination would have been the same. Roland can make these boys go where he chooses, and sometime in the day you would have found yourselves by some excuse at Maynard Barton, and would have found Roland talking to Mary Maynard. Will you go now, you fool?"

"Yes! yes! It is twelve miles to Maynard Barton, and twelve miles is something. It would have been something to you once, Miss Evans."

"Heaven knows it would!" said Aunt Eleanor. "Well, my dear, when it is all over, and you want to eat your own heart in peace and quietness, come to the old woman at Pulverbatch, and begin a new life with her. You won't die over it, you know—you have too much chest, and are too active in your habits; but if you think you are going to get out of this without deep pain and misery, you are mistaken. See, they are calling for you. Run, my dear—and put the knife in delicately under your fifth rib."

She did not hear the last sentence; but running up to the door, found her mother with her hat ready for her, and immediately afterwards, having received a tremendous kiss of reconciliation from her brother Jim, was pitched on her horse by him, and they all went away through the lanes towards the mountain.

The horses were of course good, and they all rode well (according to the English standard—a ridiculously low one compared with that of South America). They could, however, ride better than French people, and their horses were well trained and quiet: so they enjoyed themselves.

They were soon through the lanes, and out on the heather. Roland Evans

and John Mordaunt rode in front, and the old pointer was sent out before them. Behind them rode abreast Eddy, Jimmy Mordaunt, and his sister Ethel, who were more than once cautioned by the two elders in front about making so much noise; for Eddy and Jimmy were furious and fantastic in their horse-play, and Ethel laughed loud and long at them. "They seem jolly behind there, those three," said John Mordaunt.

"Very jolly. Keep quiet there: we shall have the birds up," said Roland.

"Quiet there, Ethel," said the elder Mordaunt, calling back to them.

The old dog had pointed five times on the south slope of the Longmynd, and had been whistled away. "There are at least four packs here," said Roland.

"And we are not half over the south side," said stolid old John Mordaunt. "We shall spot at least four or five packs more on this south side: send the dog on."

"I should like to try the north side," said Roland. "Have you any objection?"

"Not in the least," said the elder Mordaunt. "You mean towards Maynard Barton? I have not the slightest objection to going there or anywhere, so long as one understands where one *is* going. Northward, ho! you three jawers. We are going to beat among the bilberry slopes towards Maynard Barton. Ethel, you mind the blind ruts. We will lunch with old Mother Maynard, d'ye hear?"

"Are you going to Maynard Barton to lunch?" asked Roland.

"We had better, I think," said the elder Mordaunt. "We shall know how things stand."

"I don't understand you," said Roland.

"I don't think you do," said John Mordaunt.

"Twelve miles out of all eternity," she said, and here was her reward. Not one single word from him during the whole ride; nothing but the tomfooleries of her brother and Eddy Evans. And at the last, when they found themselves dismounting in front of the low dark-red façade of nearly the oldest and perhaps the most prosperous of Shropshire houses, only this for her twelve miles' ride. Mary Maynard, wonderfully pretty, and silly almost to idiotcy; and Roland bending over this doll, this fool, with his really fine genius flashing from his eyes.

Old Mrs. Maynard was the very mother you would have selected out of a dozen, as the mother of the strong, good-humoured, good-looking giant who was at that moment daundering about with Mildred Evans at Stretton. If you had to compare her to a flower, it would be to a cabbage-rose, extremely beautiful, but rather stout—a rose which budded well, but which opened coarsely. Compare her to a bird, she was a pouter pigeon, full-breasted, fussy, affectionate, and never for one instant silent. She was a widow, and intensely interested in love-making, as she was also in eating and drinking. She was in her flower garden when our party appeared, and having given one glance at them, went swiftly indoors, and gave tremendous orders for lunch.

The elder Mordaunt, who had by far the oldest head on his shoulders of all our party, in spite of his blockish look, noticed that this good dame, whom he knew very well indeed, was a little distraught and not quite herself. He had reason to think that he might as well watch matters this day and he watched her.

Mary Maynard was out in the porch to receive them, and when they had dismounted, and were all standing about on the terrace, talking to one another, Mrs. Maynard rejoined them. Roland had gone at once to Mary Maynard, and they two were apart, laughing together; and John Mordaunt, watching keenly, noticed that Mrs.

Maynard on her arrival darted a sudden, quick, impatient, and yet puzzled look at Roland and Mary, but the next moment was all smiles. He wondered deeply, did this young man. "Hang it!" he said to himself. "The old girl ought to be satisfied with *that*."

"Now, this *is* good of you," began Mrs. Maynard. "The very first day too: to come over all this way to see me. I need not ask where Robert is; I am sure he is where I wish him to be. Tell Mildred to send him over as soon as she can: a mother must wait under such circumstances—must she not, John Mordaunt? Roland, you have never paid your compliments to me. Come here and pay them—are these your university manners? Mary, go in and see that they are getting lunch. Roland, I was saying" (she wasn't) "that it was so good of you to come over and bring Ethel with you the very first day."

"My brothers gave me leave to come," said Ethel, quietly.

"To be sure, to be sure," said Mrs. Maynard. "So kind of your brothers to bring you over the very first day. Well, well, come in, and we will see what there is to eat. Roland, give Ethel your arm."

"Thank you, I am not lame," said Ethel.

"Well, well! Lame! no indeed! Lame, she says; that is good; conceive a Mordaunt lame—no, no! Or an Evans either, for that matter. Come into the drawing-room—it is rather dark coming out of the sun. I keep the sun out of the room to spare the carpet; for James will be bringing your sister here some day, Rowland, and I must quit. Take care of the footstools, Ethel. Roland, she will break her neck; guide her."

"I can see as well as Roland," said Ethel; and they all sat down in the darkened drawing-room.

If it was difficult to keep Eddy Evans and Jimmy Meredith quiet in the class or lecture, it was hopelessly impossible to keep them quiet, without legal supervision, after a twelve miles' ride, when they were both petulantly expective of their victuals. They fell out instantaneously, and cast away the scabbard; and Ethel sat and laughed at them.

Eddy deliberated where he should sit down, and while he remained standing Jim Mordaunt remained standing also, with his eye fixed upon him: of which fact Eddy was not unconscious. At last he said, looking at a sofa, "I shall sit here." Whereupon James Mordaunt bore down swiftly on that same sofa, saying, "I am going to sit there." A tremendous single combat ensued, during which James Mordaunt, who was as strong as a bull, managed to take away Eddy Evans' watch, chain, and money, and transfer them to his own pocket. After which he sat quietly down in a chair by his sister, and called her attention to the pictures.

Eddy was beginning his plaint. "I have been robbed in your house by a ruffian, Mrs. Maynard, while my brother has sat and looked on," when he stopped, and every one started, Mrs. Maynard included; for a quiet voice out of a dark corner said,

"The boy Mordaunt minor, will restore the property to Evans minor, and will write out the first book of Euclid." Whereupon the elder Mordaunt said to himself. "So *that's* her game: well I have no objection, I am sure." And Mrs. Maynard said, somewhat querulously in spite of herself, "My dear Sir Jasper Meredith, how you frightened me! I thought you were gone."

"Gone, when I was ordered off. Why, no," said Sir Jasper Meredith. "I wanted to stay and see my friends. I shan't go without my lunch now. Roland or Johnny Mordaunt, or any of you but Jimmy and Eddy, give my poor bones a hoist into the dining-

room, for there is the butler announcing the vivers."

There was a general outcry of recognition, for he was a great favourite; and the bull-headed elder Mordaunt took him on one arm, and carrying his crutches in the other, carried him into the dining-room, and set him down between himself and his sister; James and Eddy skirmished in, Eddy, half begging, half fighting for the recovery of his property, and the rear was brought up by Roland and Mary, who sat side by side.

Not a soul spoke to Mrs. Maynard except in the way of politeness: matters were gone out of *her* hands, for good or for evil. Such of the company as glanced towards Roland and Mary might see that he was bending his face towards hers, and talking so low that no one could catch what he said, and that she was answering him by very few sentences, each of which was accompanied by a bland, vacant giggle. Eddy and James Mordaunt misconducted themselves as usual, James saying that Eddy was overeating himself, and Eddy saying that James was drinking too much wine. The spectacle of these two fresh, innocent lads, with their babyish horse-play of taking the food off one another's plates, might have been amusing at another time, but was passed without notice now. There were several anxious hearts at that table, and possibly the widow Maynard's was the most anxious of all; though, indeed, Ox Mordaunt, looking across Sir Jasper Meredith to his beautiful sister, was in his way anxious too. For Ethel, there was no anxiety shown in *her* face. When her bright clear eye was not looking down in pity and admiration on Sir Jasper Meredith, it was raised to her brother's honest broad head, and he could look back to her—well, as she asked her brother to look at her.

And with one of these glances of affection from brother to sister, across that unconscious cripple, Sir Jasper Meredith's head, there went this unspoken sentiment. "He *can't* be such a fool." Apparently, however, he was; for Mary Maynard and Roland were whispering and giggling down at the lower end of the table, and Dame Maynard's brow grew darker and darker.

The only reasonable conversation at that table was that between John and Ethel Mordaunt, and Sir Jasper Meredith; the little baronet, lying, a heap of deformed bones, at the bottom of his chair, just able to feed himself, and no more, with the ox-like Mordaunt on one side, and the beautiful Eleanor on the other; he considered himself in good company, and said so.

"There seems to be a strength comes into my bones when I sit between you two," he said. "I wish you hadn't got any money, you two."

"Why so?" said Ethel.

"Because then I could give you my money to sit alongside of me and talk to me, as you are doing now."

"But we will do that without your money," said Mordaunt. "And our conversation is not worth much."

"You are not clever, you two; but then you are so good. I should like my Roland to be with me too, for he is handsome, and you are not handsome, you know. At least, you are handsome, Miss Mordaunt, are you not?"

"Don't you think so?" said Ethel.

"*I* don't know, bless you," said Sir Jasper, "I am too blind to see you. I can see Roland's beauty when he is bare-headed by the shape of his head, and I cannot see your head for your hair."

"You are not so blind as you pretend to be," said John Mordaunt.

"Indeed I am. I can see nothing in quiescence; I can see things in motion well enough, and I am getting stronger in my sight. I like to see

Roland row, though I abuse him for doing so."

"I think you are quite right," said old Mordaunt, "I back you up there. But this blindness of yours, there is a little affectation about it, is there not?"

"Well, perhaps a little," said Sir Jasper, laughing. "There are none so deaf as those who won't hear, and none so blind as those who won't see. And I won't see the girl who is giggling down there, charm her mother never so wisely."

"What! it is as I thought, then?" said John Mordaunt.

"*I* don't know what you thought," said the little cripple. "I only know that the estates come entirely into Robert Maynard's hands on his coming of age, and that the widow Maynard, his mother, has only a fortune of £1000 a-year, and that she and your future brother-in-law do not hit it off very well. I know, moreover, Miss Mordaunt, that Mrs. Maynard is so fond of good living and of a good establishment that she would sell her daughter to an articulate skeleton like myself to secure it; do you see?"

"I see perfectly," said Ethel, in the coolest way in the world. "But surely the Evans' connexion, which seems to be progressing so favourably there, will suit all parties."

"It will suit all parties but one. Of course it is evident that Roland is desperately smitten with Mary Maynard; and it is equally obvious (although you may be disinclined to believe it) that she has sufficient mind of her own to prefer Beauty to the Beast. The only person that the Roland-Mary connexion would not suit would be the old woman."

"He is a precious good catch for her," said John Mordaunt.

"Yes, but he is not such a good catch as *me*," said Sir Jasper. "Roland!—I have hardly patience at his impudence in daring to compete with *me* in a matter like this!—Roland has no qualifications comparable to mine! His father will live thirty years longer; mine is dead. In case of Mary's marrying Roland, which seems, after to-day, certain, Mrs. Maynard will only have an elder son's house to retire to; in case of Mary's marrying me, she would have a house of 14,000 acres to retire to, and no one to stand in the way of her management but her own daughter, who is as clay in her hand, and a miserable cripple like myself, who cannot get up-stairs without his valet."

"Mary Maynard must have a will of her own," said Ethel, "or she would scarcely go on with Roland as she is doing, without her mother's consent."

"She is only allowed to do so to-day," said Sir Jasper, "because I, steadily declining to come to book, Roland is kept as second string to the old woman's bow. That old woman would sell her daughter to the Cham of Tartary, and the girl would never wince at the bargain. Look at her with Roland now."

"She seems quite devoted to him indeed, and he to her. How pretty her ways are!"

"Very pretty indeed," said Sir Jasper. "You mean her pretty little way of turning her head up into his face when he speaks to her?"

Ethel said, "Yes."

"Ah, it is very pretty. I engaged a new groom the other day, and he was brought in to see his new master, and I saw the look on that young man's face when he first set eyes on this ruined heap of humanity, which his fellow-creatures call Sir Jasper Meredith. I saw repugnance in his honest, uneducated eyes, a repugnance which I have removed since. Yet Miss Mordaunt, that pretty girl, now using her pretty ways to Roland, has been all this morning using them to the very same heap of disordered bones which is sitting beside you, and which shocked a coarse groom!"

"You don't shock us. We love you. And, therefore, why need you have shocked her?" said Ethel. And the elder Mordaunt said, "Right, Ethel! Well said!"

Said Sir Jasper, airily, "There is not much to shock in her. However, you two hear me to the end. The old woman will have Roland if she can't get me, and she is not going to get me. And now, mark me: I will die in the workhouse (which, with my wealth, is improbable), or in the hospital (which is extremely probable, in case of my attempting the crossings at Hyde Park Corner, or at Farringdon Street; indeed I have made myself a life-governor of both institutions, with a view to such a contingency), but I will never let Roland's life—a life of such unexampled promise—be ruined by marrying that girl."

Could he hear Ethel's heart? Professor T—— tells us that a slight nervous twitch in one of his legs was enough to puzzle a party of spiritualists. If the good professor's legs are subject to such terrible nervous manifestations as Ethel Mordaunt's heart, we should be inclined to ask him, as a man we cannot do without, to give up his Alpine excursions. Her heart thumped, and beat, and throbbed in a way to puzzle any number of spiritualists; but the heap of bones lying in the chair beside her never heard it, and her face never betrayed it.

She said, very quietly, "Get me some of those cherries, Johnny; not the May-Dukes, but the Morellas; I like sour cherries. My dear Sir Jasper, if you would kindly take the trouble, at some leisure moment, to put it to yourself what extreme nonsense you have been talking, I think that your death-bed, whether it be at St. George's or Guy's, will be all the easier."

"As how, then, Beatrice?" said Sir Jasper; "give me some of your cherries, or tell him to get me some more. No; I want yours; your brother has picked out the best for you, and I want them. Hand them over."

"I will give them to you; but it is not very polite of you to want them," said Ethel.

"I am not going to be polite," said Sir Jasper. "Disabuse your mind of the idea. I want your cherries. What were you going to ask me?"

"I was going to point out to you the nonsense you have been talking. You say that you will prevent this match from taking place, which is utterly foolish and wrong; and as a matter of curiosity, I should like to know what business it is of yours, and what means you are going to employ?"

"My reasons against the match are that I don't choose it to take place; and my means are—well, they are so numerous that I could not even give a catalogue raisoneé of them. But I won't have Roland's life destroyed by marrying that chit of a girl."

"How are you to stop it?" said John Mordaunt. "It is gone too far for you, I doubt. Look at them now."

"Well, it *is* a strong flirtation," said Sir Jasper; "but I won't have it. At times I have thought of marrying the old woman myself (she would have me fast enough), and keeping the girl as an old maid for her to bully. At another time I have thought of opening Roland's eyes; but then he is decidedly in love with her, and would resent anything I said of her. At another time I have thought that if he had not been an idiot he would have fallen in love with—with some one else. However, that is all over; there they go. Look at them. Confound—but it shan't be for all that."

"Looks as if it was all over," said bull-headed old Mordaunt; "don't it, Ethel?"

"It seems so," she said, quietly and naturally. "They have got their heads close together there in the garden,

haven't they? Let us get up and go."

How much do cripples, and blind people, and deaf and dumb people, and people who are cut off from the ordinary means of human intercourse see or feel more than we do—who can say? Sir Jasper Meredith, lying there in his ruin, had some dim idea that there was something in the nature of a cloud, and the only way which he knew of dispersing a cloud was by the old Shrewsbury trick of nonsense.

There might have been a little cloud in her eyes; there might have been a slight tendency to expanding her bust, and casting her head back like a snake about to strike, which, according to Mrs. Gray, was a specialite of the Mordaunts. Sir Jasper Meredith could not say why, but he felt it necessary, and more than that, imperatively necessary, that some one should talk nonsense to her. "She looks a deal too old for her age," he said to himself. "She don't like that arrangement. Let me make her laugh. It is impossible that she can care for Roland, and yet she is angry at this."

Ethel had risen, with her beautiful square head on one side, and her riding-habit gathered under her left arm, and had said, "It is time we went home." When Sir Jasper said, "My dear Miss Mordaunt, will you sit down again, for I wish to speak on a matter of business, and your brother being present, no time can be so good as this."

Ethel sat down at once, and her brother ate cakes.

"I wanted to ask you, Miss Mordaunt," said Sir Jasper, "whether you would like to marry me, and become Lady Meredith?"

Ethel looked at him for one moment, but took time at her answer. She was puzzled for an instant, but she saw that he meant to please and amuse her, and she met him.

"You might do worse," she said, bending her beautiful face towards the heap of bones, "and again you might do better; you might marry Mrs. Maynard, or her daughter. Give me your qualifications."

"Twenty thousand a year," said Sir Jasper.

"Nineteen thousand five hundred too much," said Ethel. I shall marry a parish doctor, learn nursing, and get something to do. At any rate, I will not have a word to say to you. And, besides, sir, you are false and faithless, for you love another. No, sir."

Merely a wild, random shot of nonsense, kindly meant; but she saw that her arrow had hit, and had gone deep. No one saw the slight spasm which passed over Sir Jasper's face as she said these words, and she held her tongue honourably.

"Mrs. Maynard," she said, aloud, "Sir Jasper Meredith has just made me a proposal of marriage, which I have refused in the most peremptory manner. I really think that, after such a dreadful ordeal as this, I ought to go to my mother—you always do go to your mother in a case of this kind, don't you? Assist me with your experience."

The experience of Mrs. Maynard was so different to that of this frank, bold, honest girl that she really had nothing to say. As for her having sufficient humour to see that the whole thing was a joke between two people who had been children together, and were mere brother and sister, that was not in her. She did not doubt that the thing had taken place, and that she saw before her a girl who had refused a man with twenty thousand a year, and coal under his property, and he a cripple, which was such an immense advantage. She was simply dumbfoundered. She rang the bell, and ordered round the horses, and Sir Jasper took occasion to order his pony-carriage.

It was very awkward. No one spoke

for a long time, until Sir Jasper, in a wicked croak, said, "Think twice over your decision, Miss Mordaunt. You will never get such another offer in your life. Just think an instant. Twenty thousand a year and a cripple! Think of that—a helpless cripple! Why, bless you, Miss Mordaunt, you are entirely unable to see the wonderful advantages which you are refusing. You have only to take away my crutch, and you are absolute mistress. You could cut up my deer-park for the coal that's underneath it, and double your income, while I lay powerless on the sofa."

"It is of no use," said Ethel; and they all crowded out.

Young Evans and young Mordaunt could not, of course, mount without riot and confusion; but at last they were all fairly under way. Eleanor had been put on her horse by her elder brother, and had ridden forward with young Evans and young Mordaunt—ostensibly to pacify their great quarrel, in reality to aggravate it; for in her heart she loved nonsense and fun, as did Aunt Eleanor. James Mordaunt entirely refused to give up Edward Evans' watch and chain, although he had restored his money. On being appealed to by his sister to give up the watch, he replied that there were certain cases in which the ordinary laws of social morality were held in abeyance, and that this was one. He had thought the matter through, and had concluded to retain the watch, more particularly as it was a better one than his own.

Old Mordaunt said to Roland Evans, "Well, old boy, I congratulate you."

"On what grounds, Johanne Mi?" said Roland.

"On your engagement with Miss Maynard," said the ox.

"Are you mad?" asked Roland.

"Are you?" said old Mordaunt. "You *can't* be a humbug; but you may be an ass. Are you not engaged to her?"

"Certainly not," said Roland. "What could have put *that* into your head?"

"What put it into your head to keep it so close to hers, old fellow?" said old Mordaunt.

"I was only talking about her brother, who is to be married to my sister. There is nothing between us. The girl is a fool. Why, your sister Ethel is worth fifty of her."

"So I think myself," said old Mordaunt.

"But I don't want to be engaged to any one. *I* shall never marry, bless you."

"Then I would let that be understood," said old Mordaunt. "The girls say you are good-looking. I don't see it myself, but they say so. And if you keep your head so close to Mary Maynard's as you did to-day, you ought to mean something."

"You are a perfect fool, Johnny," said Roland. "To prove what a perfect fool you are, I will go and do the same thing with your own sister. I suppose that I am not suspected *there?* Perhaps you would like to get up a scandal between Eddy and Aunt Eleanor. I leave you to your thoughts."

He went forward and detached Ethel from the squabbling lads. He rode beside her all the way home, and he led her away from the others. He called the old pointer to him, and, on the north side of Longmynd, he took her down a little glen, alone. The old dog stood, and Roland, laying his hand on Ethel's, guided her horse gently in front of the dog, until he showed her the old grouse, swelled out with indignation, in the heather, and the chicks running after her, "Peet! peet! peet!" "Is it not a pretty sight?" he said, with his hand still on hers, looking into her face.

It was a very pretty sight indeed, that beautifully imperial head, with the

large speculative eyes. He did not mean that. He was speaking of the grouse-poults.

"It is a very pretty sight," she said. "We had better go home now we have seen it."

"I am sure that it was a pretty sight," said Roland, "for the beauty of it is reflected on your face. Good gracious! don't tell your brother that I said that, or he will be wanting to make out that I am in love with *you* next. He has accused me of being engaged to Mary Maynard this blessed day. After that, he is capable of saying anything."

"Then there is no truth about this between you and Mary Maynard?"

"No more than there is between you and me," said Roland. "Why, she is practically my sister."

Ethel might have wished it otherwise, but she was quite contented on the whole. So on the long summer afternoon she rode beside the man she loved, her loveless lover, through the heather, idle, foolish, aimless.

Come elsewhere with me, if you please. We have had nearly enough of these silly, ornamental people for the present. Let us see how another life or two, with the most important bearing on these summer butterflies, are wearing on. Keep, please, in your mind, the picture of the beautiful Ethel, and the beautiful Roland; she loving him beyond everything created; he not loving her better than his pretty brother Eddy, or young Jim Mordaunt. Leave those two sitting on their horses, whose knees were bathed in the summer heather, and come away with me elsewhere—into the squalor of London.

CHAPTER XII.

THIS life of the rich English country gentleman would seem wonderfully beautiful. In a well-set, well-ordered, well-trained house of this kind, you get almost all the things which are supposed by ordinary people to make life valuable. To begin with, you get rules of life and conduct, in which you believe, and which are easy to follow: the following of which (such as going to church in the morning and being as respectable as another generally) gives you the prestige of being a respectable person. Next you get an *entourage* of accumulated beauty and accumulated tradition. No one ever knows of the accumulated art treasures in any old country-house, until a sleepy and tangled-headed housemaid burns it down. There you have enough to eat and drink; all of the best. There you have air, light, exercise. The beauty of horses, the beauty of dogs, the beauty of your grass-lands in spring and of your corn-lands in summer. The beauty of your budding oaks in May, when the soft note of the wood-pigeon tones down the slightly vulgar and too vivid green, and the beauty of intertwining beech-twigs in winter, when the woodcock rises like some swift, dim, noiseless ghost, and you have to concentrate your whole intellect—all that is in you—into that second when you press your trigger, and the pretty innocent bird lies dead with outstretched wings on the dead leaves before you.

Then, again, there was a greater beauty and a greater charm than any of these things in a highly-toned English country gentleman's house. I mean the relations with servants; the relations between master and man, between mistress and maid. One would be inclined to think that no relations could be much more pleasant than those between a good master and a good servant. These th ngs, like much else, have passed away; one only alludes to this relation in saying that the lives of such lads as the Evanses and the Mordaunts are more to be envied, in many ways, than those of any lads in Europe.

Now we will leave these Evanses and Mordaunts, and go to Camden Town.

That great outcome of one side of British genius is one of the first things which an intelligent foreigner should be taken to see. As an example of the national genius displayed in architecture I conceive that it is unequalled in Europe, and also in America; and in this opinion I am confirmed, after consultation, by in-

telligent travellers, who go with me in saying that it is absolutely unique. There is a depth of vulgarity about it with which the Nevskoi Prospect and the Hausmann Boulevards compete but feebly. The Russian and the Frenchman have each made an effort at soulless, characterless vulgarity, but they have failed because they have brought in the element of size or bigness, the only thing which saves Niagara from being one of the ugliest cascades in the world. Now, in Camden Town we have surpassed ourselves. We have had the daring greatness to be little, mean, and low. We have banished all possibility of a man's expressing his character in the shape of his house; that is nothing—have not mere French prefects done the same? But we have done more. Over hundreds of acres we have adopted a style of house-building which is, I believe, actually unique in the history of the world. The will and genius of a nation often—nay, generally—expresses itself in architecture. Nineveh, Paris, San Francisco, St. Petersburg, Pitt Street, Sydney, the Pyramids, are all cases in point. With regard to Axum, of the Ethiopians, and Caracorum, of the Tartars, one has little reliable information, but I have no doubt that they would bear this out, and assist one in rendering the theory arguable, that the genius of a nation generally expresses itself in its houses.

It would be unwise to commit one's-self. With Chatsworth and Buckingham Palace before us, it could not be asserted that the very curious taste for gregarious vulgarity of opinion among the least vulgar, and really the most independent, people in the world, has culminated at Camden Town. It is possible to say that, if Arminius were to see Camden Town, he would remark, "Here is the genius of the English nation in bricks and mortar. Stone don't pay. You can't get at best more than four per cent. out of fair Ashlar, and you ought never to build under seven."

Yet there are about one million people, of good education, who live in these Philistine Ghettos in London, and never grumble. Is there any reader who does not know some family living in one of these artistically abominable terraces—some family shut up, with not too much money, in a hideous brick box—a family which, in spite of its inartistic surroundings, exhibits every form of gentleness and goodness. Any reader who does not know such a family is exceptionally unfortunate.

Some, whose souls are elsewhere, never think of its being inartistic and squalid. Others, the people who habitually eat their hearts, beat against such a prison like caged tigers. Until his mother came to him, young Gray never thought of finding fault with the decent, quiet little home he had prepared for his grandmother. When she came, he wished she had never come, for he saw anew that she disliked him, and only knew afresh that he disliked her; and now that she had come, she took good care to prove to him, not only that she disliked him, but that she hated Camden Town; and what was still more unfortunate, utterly hated his ways and his works. A glance at him would not be amiss.

I have heard this gentlest, tenderest, and least cruel of men compared to a bloodhound in face, because of a certain solemn and majestic carriage of the head, and a lofty, uplooking, speculative habit of the eyes, which the bloodhound has among dogs, above all other dogs. In mind Gray certainly resembled the bloodhounds: in this, at least, being nearly the gentlest and kindest of created beings; here the fancied resemblance ceases. The bloodhound is the stupidest of dogs. Allan Gray had a very noble intellect.

I have described that wild, fierce boy (for he was little else), James Mordaunt, as carrying his head well;

Allan Gray carried his as high as ever did James Mordaunt. They both carried them like men ready to strike; and when you consider that, from the utter unsimilarity of their education, their utter divergence in every possible line of thought, these two youths *might* have had to strike one another, one had better pray that they should he kept asunder.

In stature, he was singularly tall and well made, though very slight. Even at his present age of thirty, he looked like forty—like a made man. In manner he was extremely precise; silent and courteous; in dress excessively neat.

Seeking about, scarcely guided at all, for a rule of life, he had found a certain very eminent clergyman of the Evangelical party who had given him one which suited him so well, that he never departed from it. An entire faith in the verbal inspiration of the Bible; a resolute habit of self-examination and prayer; and an intense desire to do his whole duty towards every one in this world: these were his rules of life, and he followed them well, while Aunt Eleanor disliked him, and called him prig. Though, while she laughed, she said that the world would get on no worse for a few more of the same stamp.

His temper was naturally very quick indeed, but he soon discovered this and tamed it—you will never see it exhibited. The good and noble man who had done so much for him had an intense dislike of art in all forms, and his teaching in this respect had fallen on congenial soil in the case of Allan Gray. What with being naturally short-sighted, and what with having a very intense and practical mind, he was absolutely unable to understand the very word. Religiously, objects of art were strictly forbidden by the second commandment; practically, they were a dead and totally unprofitable loss of money, which mgiht be given to all kinds of good works. He admired his little home in Camden Town as being neat and respectable, and as representing a great deal of sheer hard work and of trust from his employers. In the jewellery which passed under his hands he had taste—but not of his own. As we know, some boys, too stupid to learn their Euclid, actually learn it *by heart*, and pass examination in *that* singular way. So Allan Gray had actually learnt by rote what was in good taste and in bad, and was more looked up to as an authority in that matter than any one in the shop.

Such a man brought to such a home his wild old fury of a grandmother; and in his honest, kindly loyalty, laid the whole of his hardly earned home at her feet.

For the first week they got on very well together indeed. He returned promptly from his business, and gave up his whole time to settling her and making her comfortable. It was at the end of the very first week, however, that the first jar occurred.

"As you are now comfortably settled, grandmother," he said, at breakfast, "I need not come home so early. Indeed I shall not be home before eleven."

She merely shrugged her shoulders; but he saw that she did not like it. "I shall go to bed early," she said. "I don't care for looking out on the gas-lamps."

"Can you not read, grandmother?"

"I have not got anything to read. I have read the newspaper, and I have nothing to read besides."

"Have you read the book I gave you?"

"No. It is a religious book, which ought to be read by a religious woman, which I most decidedly am not, and don't mean to be. I'll go to bed and think of the fine old times."

I think all women can be kind when they have given deep pain, even to a man they dislike. She saw such a look of hopeless pain in Allan

Gray's face as he left the room to go to his business that she called him back.

"There, you silly lad," she said, "don't mind what I say. You meant kindly by bringing me here, and we shall do very well. I came because I thought it would be a change, and I love change; and, heaven help me, I have got it; it is duller than the other place. Let us bear with one another, boy. I have money, and in a few years it will be yours."

"You do not think I want your money, grandmother? I had not the wildest idea you had any."

"Go to your work," she said, imperiously; and he went.

When he was gone, she said, "I knew that he did not know that I had any. He is quite honest. I wish I had not come. Brick walls for Caradoc; a methodist, or a pretended one, for my garden of beauties. Allan's Puritan crop and mutton-chop whiskers for Roland's curly head and Eddy's pretty eyes. Well, I am freer here."

Such was the life to which Allan Gray was condemned. Was it an unbeautiful or an unhappy one? I think that you will say that it was not. That it was a singular contrast to the very beautiful life of the Mordaunts, the Evanses and the Maynards, is most true. Camden Town is not Caradoc, nor Saffron Hill Longmynd: any more than Allan Gray, the toiler, was Roland Evans, handsome and strong, the favourite among favourites of fortune. Yet they were both happy men in their way. Both lived in the future: the one in a future of anticipated triumph; but Allan Gray's future went further than Roland's as yet, Allan's future went deep and far into the next world; his quiet fanaticism was as potent a means of taking him out of himself as were Roland's dreams of triumphs in the Schools or the Senate. Roland's surroundings were as graceful and as beautiful as those of a Greek. Allan Gray could dispense with them, nay, was even glad to do so, for he called them in his quaint language "a snare." A man who is perfectly assured that in thirty years he will be walking in the City of the New Jerusalem, as described in the 21st of Revelations, is not likely to care much about the inartistic squalor of Camden Town, even if he could appreciate it, which Allan Gray could not. The costermonger, against whose barrow this solemn young gentleman walked sometimes, and to whom this solemn "young swell" apologize, did not know that the tall young gentleman was thinking with his whole soul over the beatific vision. The Romish priest for whom Allan sent when he found that a soul was craving, on the verge of death, for the old offices which had given comfort before, little thought that the young man with the face like a bloodhound, who had so courteously handed over the dying man to him, went home to pray that the Scarlet Abomination might cease out of the land.

A most perfect fanatic—a man who was unable to appreciate any form of artistic beauty—a man given up to a business which he hated and despised; and yet who had a flower-garden too; a garden also in which he could see his flowers grow. They were apt to wither and die, certainly; but he had heard that of all flower-gardens.

On this day, when he had first left his grandmother alone, he went first to his place of business, the jeweller's, and dashed at once into the books. The partners came to him once or twice on business, and he gave back their kindly smiles of courtesy and trust as frankly and as honestly as any man could. So he worked away at the dull figures, which were not dull to him, for he had his purpose, until nearly three o'clock in the day, and then uneasily began to hear the

carriages pass. "I must go into Vanity Fair soon, I doubt," he said to himself.

He was quite right. A youth came in, and said, "If you please, Mr. Gray, Mr. Henry wants you. And Allan, with a sigh, arose and followed.

Mr. Henry was the youngest partner, Allan's old friend: he managed to brush past him. "Allan, my dear," he said, "to the rescue! Father and uncle are both engaged, and here is the Duchess of Cheshire wanting loose opals and sapphires for setting."

"C. 16 and Q. 19," said Allan, in whisper, and passed on, with his head in the air, for his interview with the Duchess, looking uncommonly like an ideal duke himself. What were principalities and powers to *him!*

"The stones will be here at once, your grace," he said, calmly, "One of the house has gone for them. May I take the liberty of inquiring whether it is your grace's intention to set the stones together?"

The Duchess said, "I had a design of doing so. I waned to give my daughter, Lady Alice Barty, a necklace for her wedding. I thought they would look pure and innocent," said the natural woman. "I mean, I thought it would be in good taste," said the artificial one.

Allan bowed, and said, "They will be here directly, your grace." He was back for one instant among the sapphire, the sardonyx, the jasper, and the chalcdony of the New Jerusalem; but he had two existences; he was quite ready for her when she said—

"Do you think it will do?"

Now the Duchess of Cheshire was, in her old age, a very religious woman of a certain sect; and a very open-handed woman also, as more than one prophetical expounder of the Revelations well knew. Allan Gray knew it, but would have died sooner than trade on it; nevertheless, he gave this singularly odd answer, which, coming from a shop-manager to a Duchess, must have rather astounded her grace.

"It would scarcely do, your grace, as the taste of the world goes. And, as a general rule, you present to a young lady, on her real entrance into the world, something symbolical."

"Yes," said the old lady; "but sapphire represents the blue of heaven, and the cloud of onyx the troubles on earth." For she had got rambling, too, and was thinking of the time when her son Charley was killed in the duel, and of other disasters since, and forgot that the solemn, imperial gentleman before her was only a shop "manager."

"In the New Jerusalem, your grace," said the shopman, quietly, "which we will pray that the Lady Alice may enter, the gates were twelve pearls: why should not her ladyship have a twelve-fold *collier* of large pearls, with the other jewels interspersed? *That* would be really symbolical, I should fancy, under your grace's approbation, and at least Christian."

The astonished old lady could only say, "*Faut de mieux*—would the colours be in good taste?"

"They would be in St. John's taste," said Allan, with that curious confidence and audacity which few other sects possess now, and remained silent.

"It is really a beautiful idea," said the old lady. "Your house is famous for its good taste. I think I will say yes; I like your idea very much; you are evidently a good young man. Plan out the necklace for me." And she retired to her carriage, and talked all the evening, and for many evenings, of the wonderful young man at Morton's. And Lady Alice Barty wore that necklace on her wedding-day.

Meanwhile, Henry had been waiting with the sapphires and the opals, and seeing the Duchess depart, thought that they had missed an order. "Why, the old lady is gone," he said.

"Have you any exceptionally-large pearls?" asked Allan. "What a pity it is that we should have let the Googerat necklace go! I would give anything for those pearls now."

"Hang it! you can have them, if you want them. There was no cash produced. She is burst up, and they are in the safe, now."

"That is well. Keep the twelve best. I suppose you never heard of Chrysoprasus?"

"Never," said Henry Leighton.

"We must try Niello Antico," said Allan. "Get me these other stones, and don't disturb me, if you can help it. I will go and design this necklace; it is a large order for our house. Send the artist to me. 'And the street of the city was of pure gold, as it were transparent glass,'—that is, white enamel over gold. Send me the artist."

So the ultra-Protestant actually set to work to symbolize in his trade, in a gold necklace, the very thing which puzzles and awes the most advanced Christians. He was disturbed, if aught could disturb him.

Just before the shop's closing he was called out again. This time he had to attend to a different kind of people. An evil man was buying jewels for a young girl, and the girl had had jewels bought for her before, and knew their value, and was so particular that Gray had to be called in again. He stood before these two quite quietly, and served them well, and gave them his advice, knowing that he was serving his employers. There were plenty of precedents in the Old Testament, which he read most, but fewer in the New, which he read least. Those two were as nothing to him. A hog comes to your gate, and you throw it an apple; the hog is nothing to you, and they were less than nothing to him.

"Now," he said to the three partners, as soon as the shop was shut, "I am going to walk in my garden."

"Does your garden take much to keep up, Gray?" said the senior partner."

"Well, it would cost more than I could afford, sir, if it were properly kept up."

"Now, how much, for instance," said the senior partner—"to keep it going properly, you know—do you think it would cost to keep your garden in order?"

"The whole garden?" asked Allan; "I have only a share of it."

"Say the whole garden, then?" said the senior partner.

"Well," said Allan, "I could do something with £400,000 a-year, if I had the management of it. As it is, I do what I can."

"We were going to increase your salary," said the senior partner, laughing, "by £100 a-year, but I suppose that would not be much for your garden?"

"Very little," said Allan; and then, remembering himself, said, "You are very kind to me. I thank you deeply. I will make good use of the money which you entrust to me from God."

CHAPTER XIII.

ALLAN GRAY was walking swiftly away, with his face towards his flower-garden, when he heard himself hailed, and pausing, was overtaken by the junior partner.

"Here is a young gentleman wants you," he said; "he has been waiting at the shop-door ever so long, and having given you up, came into the shop. I ran after you."

"A young gentleman?"

"A regular young swell. He says

that he knows you would speak to him if you saw him."

Allan Gray, coming into the shop, saw a slight, deer-eyed youth before him, who held out his hands and said, "Allan, you have not forgot me?"

It was Eddy Evans. The few demonstrations of kindly feeling which Englishmen allow themselves were over in a moment. Their eyes did the rest, and then Eddy and Allan were alone in the street together.

"You had not forgot me?" said Eddy.

"Was it likely that I could forget you? Did I not think you had forgotten me?" said Allan Gray.

"See, then," said Eddy, with both his hands clasped over Allan's arm, and his face turned up into the solemn face of the other, "how unfair you can be. Have I not deserted all pleasure, as they call it, to come here for the higher and more real pleasure of seeing you?"

Allan said nothing, but he somehow noticed Eddy's hands, which were clasped over his left arm. Eddy's hands were very small, and he had on the most beautifully made lemon-coloured kid-gloves. These attracted Allan's attention so much, that he took one of Eddy's hands in his, and held it there, and passed his brown fingers up and down the seams, and said, "What pretty gloves!" For he loved the lad as much as he could love any one, and he permitted his love to demonstrate itself so far.

"I doubt you are an old brute," said Edward. "You are not a bit glad to see me."

"I am very happy," said Allan.

"Yes, but you don't show it," said Eddy. "*I* am happy to see you again, but I don't look like a——Memnon. I want to spend the evening with you. Where are you going?"

"I will go anywhere with you," said Allan. "Where were *you* going?"

"I *was* going to dine at the Bedford with the others, and then we were going to the play, and then we were going to Cremorne. But I gave it all up to come to you, and you don't care for me."

"I care for you more than for any living being, Edward," said Allan.

"Hush, man, I know you do," said Edward. "Have I not come to you? Have I not proved that I, also, care for you—after Roland?"

"Friendships will settle in a few years," said Allan. "We will see how this sentimental fondness for one another will settle itself. Which is a great problem."

"Not such a great problem as this," said Edward. "Where are you going to take me?"

"I *was* going to my flower-garden. Will you come? Dare you come?"

"I dare anything. I am an Evans, and I would sooner go to Newgate with you than to Vauxhall with another. I will come."

"Then we will go. How did you come to London?"

"Our fathers gave us money to come and see the town, and we have come to see it; Roland and Johnny, and Jimmy Mordaunt and I. And we have been to St. Paul's, which is 404 feet in height; and to the Monument, which is 202; and to the Tower, which was built by Augustus the Stark, King of Saxony; and I found it very slow, for tastes vary. Indeed, Jim Mordaunt quarrelled violently with his brother on the same subject on the very summit and top of the dome of St. Paul's, Jimmy declaring that any one could have built it if he had had the money, and Johnny accusing his brother of trying to be fine. I got sick of all this giddy dissipation, and asked Roland for liberty. So he took away my money, and let me come to you."

"Why did he take away your money?" asked Allan.

"He always does. I give it away when people ask me for it, and so does Jim Mordaunt. John Mordaunt used

to take his brother's money away until he got too big. Jim won't stand it now, and fights."

"You don't fight Roland, then?"

"No, Roland does as he likes. Nobody ever could resist Roland, you know. Besides, he leaves me some. I have five shillings or more now."

"How old are you, Edward Evans?"

"Seventeen."

"You are very childish and simple. I doubt if we had better go where we are going—yet, we will go. Are you too great a child to share my pleasure? Why should I ask you? Let us come?"

The bright evening summer's daylight fell full and strong upon the squalor of the streets through which they passed; streets which became more squalid, mean, and ugly, as they passed along. In the darkness of the winter's evening their wretchedness is hidden; under the summer sun it is patent. Eddy chattered at first, but less and less as the streets got narrower and more dirty, and at the top of Saffron Hill he was quite silent.

For the people were so wild, so strange, and so very fierce. They scolded one another so much, and when they were civil to one another, their language was hard and wild; and to Eddy, listening with his keen little ears, it seemed that their conversation turned on two things only, money and drink.

"I don't like this place," said Eddy, very emphatically; "it is a bad place. I like pretty places and pretty things. What are those bells?

"The big one?"

"Yes; the one like Tom."

"That is the bell of the Roman Catholics; they have established themselves here."

"Do they do good?"

"Every one who works for Christ does good," said Allan Gray, the extreme Protestant. "Of course, they do good. They work among these Irish, whom they have, for their own purposes, kept sitting in outer darkness, and they do good. And they'd need."

"What is the little sharp bell?" said Eddy, getting interested.

"That is the Puseyite Church," said Allan, with a smile. "We tried that together, you know, at Shrewsbury."

"I liked it," said Eddy; "you did not. Do they do good?"

"No end," answered Allan. "I get into trouble for saying so, though."

"Do you low Church people do good, Allan?"

"We think so; you must come and see. Stay here a moment; there is a row. Keep quiet."

The narrow steep lane before them was crowded with people of the very lowest order, all talking in that dreadful, hoarse, London voice, which, I confess, I have never heard elsewhere. As Allan and Eddy had been looking down that lane, they had seen it swarming with "roughs," male and female, intermingling, growling, and swearing; but now there was an incident. Ask the next policeman, or read your newspaper, before you say that I exaggerate here.

From the door of one of the houses came stumbling, impelled by some blow from behind, a woman, bareheaded and mad, who recovered her balance in the middle of the street, and confronted the door from which she had come. Her fierce, bruised face, her demoniac fury, and her horrible wild words, made Eddy tremble and cling close to Allan. In another moment a man had dashed out of the door and confronted the woman, who was at bay, and the cowardly crowd parted. It was an Irish row, and they were man and wife. No one had a right to interfere.

Then began once more the fierce, wild objurgation, rising to a scream on the part of the woman and a roar on the part of the man, until there was an instant's silence, as he went

at her. Then inarticulate curses, worse than the worst roar of any wild beast, as he seized her by the hair, cast her heavily down, and began kicking her on the head.

Not a soul of all the soulless cowards around interfered. They were Irish; the man was a dangerous character; and, moreover, they were man and wife. Not one soul interfered. Allan Gray uttered an oath which was strange to his vocabulary, and made a dash forward against the crowd; but there was one more nimble than he.

While he was stopped disputing by three or four heavy costermongers—who had the strongest objection to any interference on any grounds between a man and his "Missis," Eddy, with that rapid dexterity which is gained at football and cricket, had parted the crowd—nay, had done more. He had delivered his two little fists straight into the eyes of the Irish gentleman, and was apparently prepared to do so once more.

It is impossible to say how the matter would have ended, for the woman had risen, and dazed and stunned as she was by her husband's kicks on the head, had her wits enough about her to see that this youth before her husband was the youth who had saved her life by giving her husband two black eyes. She therefore found it necessary, according to the creed of her class, to entirely eradicate and destroy that youth. Having thrown a few flowers of speech at our poor Eddy, she made a resolute advance towards him, and in another moment it would have fared badly with him—when Allan Gray, having been recognized by some among the crowd, there was a cry raised of "Teacher! Teacher!" and he was let to pass. With singular misfortune, he arrived just in time to get between Eddy and the infuriated Irishwoman; Eddy, who was expecting another attack fro m the husband, watched Allan Gray, and knew more about him than he had ever known before. Deep down in the man there was a strain of *humour*, utterly unsuspected by himself, but detected at once by headlong Eddy, who knew the article when he saw it, if ever a lad did.

The woman raged at him, with her ten nails spread out, blind in her wrath. Gray, with great dexterity, caught her two wrists in his hands, and said, quietly, "Now, my dear, good soul, do just think how very much at random you are acting."

"Where's the young man as hit him?" she said, slightly struggling. "Give me that young man!" And then she proceeded to describe what she intended to do to that ornamental young undergraduate who had saved her from the brutality of her husband, with a degree of detail which cannot be reproduced here. Her object, it seems, was Eddy's lungs—she called them his "lights"—and garnished her speech with adjectives and participles. Her argument took the form of what a sporting paper might call "reiterated asseveration." She struggled a very little, for the poor thing was faint, and Allan Gray soon dropped her hands.

"Ah!" she said, "you're a teacher, I doubt; I didn't see you. But," with sudden vivacity, "I'll have out the liver of any chap that lays hands on my man! If they was a teacher's I would; if they was yours I would. He has been a good husband to me out of liquor, and I'll stand by him against——." Aposeopesis is the best thing here.*

* One pretends to write "a story of real life." If one were to give the mere incidents of low London life, one would be accused of exaggeration. No publisher could be found who would print the language which one hears habitually about Saffron Hill. No one who has not been there knows what that district is. Lord Shaftesbury at Field Lane, and Mr. Mackonochie at St. Alban's, Holborn, are working and civilizing most nobly. God speed them both!

"What a very foolish woman you will find yourself, if you once have sufficient resolution to bring your mind to bear upon it, you know," said Gray, with the most perfect temper. "You should bring your mind to bear on questions of this kind, and should not take action in this rapid and illogical manner. You should think the question out."

"Where is the young man as interfered between me and my man? I'll have that young man's life, I will!" she went on with that hoarse, thick, London voice, which most of us, alas! know.

"Now just think how very foolishly you are talking," said Allan Gray. "You would have been killed if he had not interfered, you know," and the whole business was suddenly finished by a maudlin and tearful reconciliation between the man and his wife, not much less disgusting than the quarrel; after which, Eddy and Allan Gray walked on together.

"I don't think much of your flower-garden, as yet," said Eddy; "these people are worse and more brutal than the country people."

"They have a hundred times more individuality of character," said Gray, shortly; and Eddy, puzzled with the length of his words, passed into a whitewashed passage, at the end of which were stone stairs.

Eddy thought first of gaols, then of workhouses, then of hospitals, as they passed up flight after flight of stairs; but at last Gray opened a door, and there was a warm whiff of hot humanity, and an universal buzz of teaching and learning voices, and he thought at once of the old class-room at Gloucester.

"Where shall I go?" said he, to Allan Gray.

"Where God directs you," said Gray. "I must attend to my class; God will see after you. *This* is my flower-garden."

A strange one. About three hundred present in a whitewashed room, of all ages, and nearly all degrees,* divided into classes. Gray having deserted him, Eddy the ornamental did what most shy English lads do when they find themselves in a social difficulty, took off his hat, and sat down in the first place he could find.

And what a queer place it was, and yet such a very familiar one. A young gentleman, in spectacles, was instructing a class of boys in Scripture history, and Eddy slipped in, on to the end of the form, as a kind of ornamental Head Boy, used to the situation, and dropped from the skies. The instant he sat down on that bench the old school-fear was upon him, and the spectacled young gentleman of his own age was his dreaded master. That young gentleman looked at him through his spectacles, and Eddy trembled. But he had sat down at the head of the class, and was committed to anything. The young gentleman looked very much as if he would like to go through a biblical pedigree or so with him, and Eddy devoutly hoped that he wouldn't.

Looking at his fellow-pupils, Eddy saw that there were eight of them, and that these sons of the conquerors of India had developed their genius in the direction of dirt. Yet there was a striking similarity to the old Shrewsbury classes in the way they behaved. The furious, irrepressible boisterousness, of which the Dean of St. Paul's complained, was rampant enough here.

As Eddy sat and looked, he saw this. Two boys, utterly tired out, had gone to sleep one against the other. A very brisk boy, who was very creditably answering the Biblical questions of the spectacled young gentleman, perceived these two boys. After looking steadily at the young gentleman and at Eddy, to take them

* We have had surgeons and engineers in Field Lane before now, and shall have them again.

into his confidence, this boy, instead of answering his question, advanced across the floor, and taking the nose of the smaller of the sleeping boys between his finger and thumb, half wrung it off his face; after which, he went back to his place with the air of a boy who had done a dexterous thing, and continued to answer biblical questions in a way.

The young gentleman in the spectacles took no notice; and as for Eddy, it seemed to him that he was back again at a school, mastered by monitors. He was wondering whether or not he could "take down" the present teacher, or whether he could be taken down himself and everlastingly disgraced by the dirty boy who had pulled the sleeping boy's nose, when a trifling miscarriage on the part of this very lively boy got him relieved from his hideous thrall.

The young gentleman in the spectacles, doing good work, if ever a man did it, sacrificing time, pleasure, age, and not a little health also, in his self-imposed task of civilizing these boys, had found nothing better to teach them than obscure and very doubtful questions of theology. He saw in Eddy, with his dark-blue necktie, an Oxford man; a congenital Puseyite, as he had been taught to believe, though Eddy was nothing of the kind. He therefore thought that he would air his boys' theology before Eddy, and send him back discomfited. The end was disaster.

"With regard to the true fold," he said; "who are the true fold?"

"All faithful people," said the lively boy who had pulled the other boy's nose.

"And for whom do we pray in this collect, that they may be brought into the fold?"

The boy meant to say, for he was a sharp boy, and remembered, "All Jews, Turks, infidels, and he.etics." What he *did* say was, "All Jews, turkeys, fiddlers, and architects." After which Eddy fled.

There was at the end of the room, next the door, a class which had no teacher at all; Eddy, in sauntering past it, and looking very curiously at it, as he did at the others, was descried by them, and, so to speak, hailed.

"Will you come here, sir? We have not got any one," said a bright-looking lad about his own age, who rose from the teacher's chair with a Bible in his hand, and confronted Eddy; who could but come, very frightened, with all his rings, and pins, and gewgaws; *he* sat down, took the Bible, and stared round him stupidly.

"I don't know anything about teaching," he began, finding it was necessary to say something, "but I know the Acts in Greek, and I have been used to class and lecture. Where are we?"

The bright-looking lad's eyes somehow attracted his, and he addressed him.

"We are on the voyage of St. Paul, sir," said the bright youth. And a voice at Eddy's other elbow said, "And we've been arguing. I maintain that St. Paul would have to tramp it from Gaeta to Rome after they got ashore there. And most burning and bustin' hot it is, as I well knows, having tramped it myself; and nothing to see when you get there. Not to be compared to the Broadway, or, for that matter, Sydney, or, if you strains a p'int, Rio, or, if you strains another p'int, Ratcliffe Highway. *I* never seen nothing at Rome equally to what you may see at Calcutta. *That's* the place. Why, old Jummagy Bummagy (Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy) hangs out a hundred times better than the old Pope. Blow *him*."

Eddy looked in his wonder to the bright lad, who understood him at once, and said,—

"Sailor, sir."

Eddy looked suddenly at the sailor —a man with close-cropped grey hair, and a red-brown face, with a rather obstinate expression; and as he did so he shut up his Bible, and the others shut up *their* Bibles. For, as the sailor said that night when he got into bed, they had been making uncommon bad weather of it.

"I want to ask you people a few questions," said Eddy. "I think you are better able to instruct me than I you. Will you tell me this—I hardly know where to begin, but this, if it is not impertinent—what have you got to live on?"

The heads went at once together to the centre of the class, listening. Some one—of course, it is nobody's business—had better look at those heads now and then, at a leisure moment. They are generally dirty, suggesting blue precipitate; yet there are eyes in them out of which the devil can look. The heads all drew together to hear what their spokesman, the bright young man, was to say to this pretty lad, with the £200 worth of jewellery on him. I doubt more than one in that class could appraise Eddy pretty accurately—at Fagin prices.

"Well, sir," said the bright young man, "we ain't any of us got none on it at all. We are all in here off the tramp."

"Have you been tramping?" asked Eddy, interested.

"Tramping round for work; yes, sir."

"How very pleasant!" said Eddy. "Why on earth did you come here? Do you mean to say that you went on from one place to another, without caring where you slept, in this beautiful summer weather? I should like that immensely."

"You see, sir, that we had nothing."

"I always thought," said Eddy, "that you had barrows of cherries, or grindstones, or vans with brass knockers, when you went on the tramp. I always thought it looked so pleasant."

"We hadn't got no money," said the sailor.

"I have not got any, either," said Eddy, wishing to awaken a fellow-feeling somehow, but feeling very much at sea. "My eldest brother has taken away my money, because he was afraid I should make a fool of myself; and my brother is a very talented young man, with a singularly good judgment."

The sailor, who was getting sleepy again, assented to this proposition more emphatically than good manners would warrant in other circles. He was decidedly of a mind with Roland.

One of the young Eutychians here suddenly became animated as though by a miracle, and said, in that hoarse Cockney voice which no one whom I have ever heard, except Mr. Maccabrcan imitate, "If the young govee, nor's brother were a near hand with the dibs, as his were, Lord knows, yet the young governor might probably have such a thing as the price of a pint of beer about him, which he'd never miss," and was continuing his argument when the sailor awakened himself thoroughly, and said in a voice which, though hoarse like the Cockney's, was not slovenly as his was, but emphatic enough to be heard ten feet off in the wildest gale which ever blew round the Horn,—

"Shut up!"

Eddy, a little frightened, looked at the bright young man, who raised his eyebrows and put up his finger. For the old sailor was going to speak; and it was evident to Eddy that this young man, for whom he was getting a stronger and stronger interest, put value on the old fellow's opinions.

"Your brother was right in a-taking your money away from you.

I can see as you've heaps on it, mor'n what most folks 'ud git through with. But you'll never have enough. You'll give it all away, as I give mine; or you'll lend it, or you'll drop it in the lee-scuppers in a gale of wind. Why, if you was paid a hundred and forty pound down, as I've known done, on the capstan-head in Hodson's Bay, for the run home, and that ship was drove into Rio through one of these racing skippers racking every stick out of her, you'd knock every penny of it down in a week. Your brother must be an uncommon sensible young man for taking your money away from you the minute you come ashore. I should like to see him. I wish I'd had a brother as would have took *mine*."

"But, sir," said Eddy, puzzled and startled, turning over the leaves of the Bible, "if you haven't got any money, we might give you some of ours."

"What 'ud be the good, with two such as you and me? I've had heaps on it at times, well earned mostly; though I picked up a digger once in Francisco, which digger is on my conscience now I'm down in my luck: fourteen hundred dollars at Eucre in three sittings, and I slipping down right or left bower* on the ground, as the hand served: Lord forgive me! He won't try to pick up a British sailor again in a hurry," went on the old man, with a flash of the old Adam. "But the money done me no good, no more than yours will. I give the main of it away, and I knocked down the rest; and then I loafed round, because I wouldn't ship for fear of another rush, and I were very bad off, young sir, until Bill Taylor come."

The bright young man whispered, "Let him go on, sir; he knows heaps of things."

Eddy, with his Bible now wide open, and his eyes more open than his Bible, asked,—

"What did Mr. Taylor do for you, if you please?"

"He convinced me of sin," said the old sailor. "And I have never lost the conviction. I can't help going on a-doing on it at times; but then, don't you see, I'm convinced of it; and that's nigh half way; for Bill Taylor said so, and there was nobody ever like he."

At this point a loud voice from the platform said, with somewhat of a whine, Eddy thought, "My brethren, I will now address you on the fourth chapter of the Ephesians;" and at the same moment he felt a touch upon his shoulder. It was Allan Gray.

"Arise, and let us go hence," he said. And Eddy arose.

But the class arose also, and came round him, and pressed on him. And the bright young man, who was spokesman, said, "Come to us again;" and all their eyes brightened when they said after him, "Come to us again."

And Eddy said, hurriedly, "I will try; I think that we might do one another good." And to the young man he said, "Tell me your name, and come to me at Ashley's Hotel tomorrow morning." And the young man gave him his name; and his name was Joseph Hartop.

CHAPTER XIV.

Allan Gray, taking Eddy, departed somewhat swiftly, by a side-door, just as the expounder of the evening had laid down his argument, which was that the whole human race was naturally doomed to a fate utterly too horrible for description, or even contemplation; that the Deity had in all time and eternity known the fate of each individual; and that there were certain symptoms by which you might know whether or not the Deity had beforehand, apparently for no reason,

* As intelligible to the British reader as it was to Eddy.

condemned you to eternal fire or everlasting bliss. Allan Gray and Eddy had heard this much before Allan got Eddy away from his new friends.

When they were in the street, Allan Gray said, "Well, it is cooler here. That fellow would have it hot enough for us, if he had *his* way."

"But I thought you were the same way of thinking yourself," said Eddy.

"Don't begin that sort of thing, pray don't," said Allan, with extreme irritation. "What earthly business can it be to you what my religious opinions really are?"

"I am very sorry," said Eddy; "I did not mean to make you angry; please don't be angry; no one is ever angry with *me*, you know."

Allan's touch on Eddy's shoulder quite reassured him. That little gentleman knew the look of an eye, and the touch of a hand, as well as most.

"My dear soul," said Allan, "who could be angry *with* you. I am only angry *to* you? You are one of the very people expressly made to be angry *to*."

"Well, be angry *to* me then," said Eddy. "What is the matter? Are you cross with the fellow who was preaching, for instance?"

"Yes. God is not a vindictive fiend."

"F—— was chassèed for saying the same things in the very same words," said Eddy.

"Let them try it with me," said Gray, in a low snarling voice. "Is Samson to sit for ever in the Temple of the Philistines? Let them provoke me to get my two arms round the pillars, and the house shall come down upon their heads, and on mine too. I tell you, young Evans, that God is not as they paint Him."

And Eddy said, "You went about searching for formulas, you know; and you have taken up with these. If they don't suit you, change them."

"Have you *no* faith left then?" said Allan.

"Yes; I think so. But ask me when I lie a-dying, and I'll tell you better about it."

"Sixty years hence," said Gray. "How is your aunt Eleanor?"

"Very bad," said Eddy, a boy again.

"What is the matter with her?" said Gray.

"The same that was the matter with the young lady in 'Pickwick'—want of taste. She don't like you."

"Does she dislike me very much?" asked Gray.

"Most specially and particularly," said Eddy. "Whatever your doubts on religious subjects may be, you may make your mind easy about *that*."

"Don't be flippant," said Gray.

"I am not," said Eddy. "I am speaking to facts. My aunt hates you like poison."

"What does she say against me?"

"She says you are such an abominable prig. And so you are, you know."

Many do not understand English badinage. When it seems coarsest and most offensive, it frequently only proves that the men who are using it are the best friends in the world. This last remark of Eddy's made Allan Gray laugh, and put him in good-humour.

This good humour was so obviously shown on the face of Allan Gray that Eddy shot his bolt, and then with his keen, kindly, steady little eye, watched to see whether or no it had hit.

"Come home with me to the hotel and see Roland."

"Oh dear, no!" was the reply.

"Well then, don't," was Eddy's not undexterous answer.

After walking a little time, Allan Gray said, "I hate meeting gentlemen."

"Which is the reason why you were sorry to see me. Go on."

"But I am not sure whether

or no it would not be better for me to meet your brother."

"Why ?" said Eddy.

"Well, I can't exactly say."

"Well then, come on, and don't be an ass."

"Mind," said Allan Gray, "he is to be civil."

"Was he ever anything else ?" said Eddy."

"He will not have returned from the playhouse," said Allan Gray.

"He is thundering away at his logic by now," said Eddy : "so come."

And so the rivals met. Eddy, in writing to his aunt Eleanor, pointed out to her that both on the father's and on the mother's side he had come of families famous,—not to say notorious,—for good manners. But he frankly confessed to his aunt that he had never seen any such politeness exhibited as was exhibited in the interview between Roland and Allan. "Allan's manners," he said, "were perfect (for there is nothing in the least degree Brummagem about Allan), but Roland beat him."

Roland, the scholar and the athlete, had his square-sided, snake-like head bent over his books when the two came in. He was sitting in his shirt-sleeves, and he caught sight of his brother first, and Allan saw him drop his pen, and noticed that the two brown hands turned themselves with their palms uppermost, and spread themselves out to meet those of the brother. Allan, standing in the shade, saw this ; but saw more. He saw a bright light in Roland's face for one instant, which he knew, but which I have a difficulty in describing. The eyebrows were elevated and the mouth was slightly parted, and from between the parted lips the soul said : "My darling ! My darling ! where have you been ?"

Allan had looked into the soul of Roland for one instant. It was enough for him. Not now for one instant dreaming of the great question which was to arise between them, he remembered those words, and envied Roland nothing but his pretty little brother.

"And which, indeed," said Eddy, "I am not going to tell you where I have been. Here is Allan Gray come to see you."

The bright expression on Roland's face was changed at once. Allan Gray only saw before him a very tall, handsome young man, with a short, curling head of hair, who rose and greeted him with the smile of courtesy—a very different smile to that with which he had greeted his brother Eddy.

"I am sincerely pleased to make your acquaintance, Mr. Gray," said Roland. "At one time I confess I was extremely jealous of the influence you had over my brother Edward. I am jealous no longer. I hear nothing but good of you. I think that you have done what I have not—conceived a line of life for yourself, and that you are following it out. I understand that you are given to good works."

This was so frankly said, and evidently so frankly meant, that even that king of prigs, Robespierre, could not have resisted it. Allan Gray had no such intention.

"You receive me frankly, and like a true gentleman," he said. "With regard to your jealousy of me, it is nothing ; with regard to my having made a scheme of life, it is time I did so; you, so young, can wait ; with regard to my good works, some of us must turn to, or the house will be afire."

"You will sit down and be comfortable, now that you have come, won't you ?" said Roland. "What are these good works of yours, and how can I assist at them."

"The work at which I am *assisting*," said Allan, "is the old work of civilization. We are trying, through one form of Christianity, to civilize

the people upon Saffron Hill. The way you can assist at it is by giving me money."

"That is easily done, and shall be done," said Roland.

"Thank you," said Allan; "send the money to me. What we, who are working, want is *money*. The Puseyites at the top of the Hill want it; the Papists are beating us by having more than we have. 'Money! Money!' is our cry. I have not got any; send me some. What are you going to do with yourself? Soldier?"

There is an implied compliment, to most young men, in being accused of going into the army. We are a nation which is never at peace. The gates of Janus are never open with our people. We are always spreading the English language somewhere. The great American army, recruited from twenty millions, beat down an army recruited by eight millions. The English army, after a death-throe with Russia, crushed out a rebellious army backed by a population of 150,000,000. Therefore, Alphonse, Arminius, and Silas, don't you get villipending the British army. Is such a lad as Roland Evans to be thought a fool because he blushed scarlet when Allan Gray called him soldier. And, indeed, he looked like it. It was a compliment. We may have had our Walcheren, or indeed our Chillianwallah. But, my good Alphonse, brother of my heart! we have never had our Passage of the Beresina (we will give Eylau as a French victory). Arminius, my dear fellow, there was a battle of Jena once. Silas, my dear, did you ever hear of Bull Run? No! All young fellows of spirit have a pride in being thought British soldiers *in esse* or *in posse*, and Roland liked Allan Gray for his suggestion; for Roland had fought most of the battles of modern Europe, and indeed some which have not been fought yet; for example, the battle of Nieder Lahnstein, where you, being (do you see,) a Frenchman, turned your Prussian left, dash at the heights behind Ehrenbreitstein, take them, and have the whole of the Rhine Provinces at your feet, don't you see, with the command of the Rhine. Roland would have undertaken to do that little business for you to-morrow, just as willingly as he would have undertaken to bring about a coalition between the older Whigs and the Radicals, both doctrinaire and uneducated, for he was a boy of schemes. And this young man, Gray, was a young man of perception. Roland warmed to him, which was well for him.

"I should *like* to be a soldier," he said; "for I am strong, courageous, and clear-headed in danger; but I fear I am condemned to Parliament."

"I wish *I* was," said Allan. "I would get some things done, I know, if I was."

"That's just it," said Roland; "you wouldn't do anything of the kind. You can do *nothing* of the things you want to do. Where would free-trade have been now, if it had not been for a combination of perfectly incalculable accidents? Peel for one accident; the Irish famine for another."

"You go too fast," said Gray. "Who told you that free-trade was a good thing, except in particular cases? I allow that free-trade in corn is good, as it feeds the people; but free-trade in other matters is murder to us in this over-populated country. When we get a nearly pure democracy, we shall have protection to native industry back again—hot and heavy. A pure democracy will never stand free-trade. When did they ever do so?"

"I don't remember," said Roland.

"I fancy not," said Gray. "Your American and your Canadian laugh it to scorn. There is such a queer *petitio principii* about it in the first term (correct me if I am wrong, for I have not been to Oxford and learnt

boat-racing), which seems to me to condemn it. We practically find that we can compete (having a very rich and compact country) with every nation on earth on advantageous terms. Therefore, free-trade is as good for other nations as it is for us. And so we send our dear Cobden to tell to other nations what he entirely believes—that a franc is as good as a shilling. Some nations believe him; some don't. The Americans don't, and they are a trading people too."

"But you are attacking the very principle of free-trade," said Roland; "why, the very Tories have given it up."

"There spoke a Whig," said Allan Gray, laughing the while. "Won't think for himself; will only think for his party. What are you going to do when you get into Parliament?"

"Precious little, I suspect," said Roland, laughing also. "It takes half a dozen first-rate men, and accidents to back them, to get any thing done. And I am not a first-rate man, and my accidents are inseparable, and become qualities. For instance, I have too much money."

"Give some of it to us then," said Allan Gray.

"I will. Depend on me; you and I should be good friends in time. Now what would you do, if *you* were in Parliament? How would you get matters done?"

"I should go on making myself a nuisance, like the importunate widow, until they *were* done; look at (passage suppressed.) Look at him, and a fool too, all said and done."

These two rather splendid young men were drawing nearer and nearer to one another. They were not very unlike in character, though cycles apart in thought. Roland moved closer to Allan, and said, "What things would you have done, for instance?"

"Why," said Allan, "I would have the poor cared for better; and with regard to the public schools ——"

He had, in reality, spoken some tolerably reasonable sentences about the public schools, but for dramatic purposes we will not repeat them. There was a violent objurgation outside the door, and then a violent crash against it. The Public Schools were upon him, to the utter puzzlement of poor Allan Gray. "Why were such fools brought into the world?" he asked himself at first. And then, when the rough prettiness of their horse-play had made him laugh, he said, "What are they good for?" Let the boy Arbuthnot answer him that question, with the flag shaping itself on to his dead limbs! India is a great fact, my dear Allan Gray, even in these times of big things; and these boys helped to get it for you. And although the 180,000,000 can't accept Christianity, yet we have made them accept railways. Our boys are working your work, Allan Gray, and pretty near half of them have died in the service. Don't abuse the boys; they are not bad fellows when you know them.

For here they come in their fury—their quaint, petulant fury, which accounts for all kind of battles; let us say from Agincourt to Magdala (popular, but incorrect). In comes Jimmy Mordaunt, blind with wrath, hotly full of his grievance; in comes Johnny Mordaunt, making as much noise as his brother. The old story—the elder brother has dexterously, in pretending to get change, grabbed all the younger one's money, and considers it as prize of war, refusing to give it up. The brothers Evans take violent sides in the dispute, and a row royal ensues.

It seemed so strange to Gray to see Roland taking part in such boys' play. It lasted some time; doubtless, like Tom Pinch's organ, to the great delight of the gentleman down stairs,

and the gentleman over head; and when it was over, Allan Gray was gone.

CHAPTER XV.

I THINK that Roland was secretly angry with the elder Mordaunt as to his good-humouredly bringing him to book about Mary Maynard. Miss Mordaunt was much too fine a young lady to have any mistakes made about her of any sort or kind. He would have been profoundly delighted that Roland should marry his sister, and would be very glad to see his friend happy with Mary Maynard. Only John Mordaunt, by far the *shrewdest* of the five boys, was determined that he should make up his mind.

Roland and Ethel had been brought up together, and had always called one another by their Christian names, and, as Roland would have said, were as brother and sister. So would not Ethel have said. Ethel's secret was known to two people, and guessed by a third.

Miss Evans had seen it, and had tried rough excision, as we saw; that awful Mrs. Gray had guessed it, and had bullied Phyllis Myrtle to give her a philter which would have only a temporary effect, and would go off, as she hoped, after they were married, causing neglect on Roland's part, and cause the red-handed, wild, rude Mordaunt clan to become her daughter's avengers on the Evans family for what she had suffered at their hands. Such was the amiable old lady's scheme at one time, before she retired to London. *She* was gone.

One more, as you may remember, knew Ethel's secret, her brother Jim. Jim used, when a youngster—indeed, right up to the time of the bathing accident—to bully every one he could get to stand it, and, among others, of course, his sister. Both of them high-spirited, rough, and strong, they used to have terrible battles, for she would resist in defence of her property, and resist fiercely too, though he was too strong for her. His father had thrashed him for it, his brother thrashed him with a cricket-stump for it; but the boy only lay quite quiet and silent on the grass while the blows descended, until Johnny, with a loud oath, threw the stump far and wide; and then the boy got up and let out his sister's fancy fowls into the farmyard — a horrid kind of revenge, which he could enjoy silently in her bitter disappointment at the shows. On the whole, I think that when she was about twelve years old she fairly and honestly hated her brother James.

That there is a natural brotherly love I know; that it may, under certain rare circumstances, be changed into a far other feeling, I have seen.

An actual cessation of hostilities took place, as a matter of course, when they were about fourteen, which was succeeded by indifference.

After Roland had saved Jim's life, there was, as the Doctor saw, a marked change in the latter. At home they were surprised at him. Though by no means less boisterous, his boisterousness had lost all its cruelty; and though he was far too close-mouthed to say anything to his sister, yet she noticed an alteration in him beginning — nay, it had scarcely begun when it was over. Before he had been home a week, John was profoundly astonished at Jim bursting into the room where Ethel and he were, and saying, "I took your whip over to Shrewsbury, and waited while it was done; and I asked for the cheesecakes, and he had not got any of them," and bouncing out again. Still more, a week after, did his father and mother notice Jim and Ethel, with their heads together, walking rapidly and

talking eagerly, going over the hill rabbit-shooting.

Of course, Jim talked a great deal now about Roland; and why should not she talk of what pleased him? This talk went on and on until it grew to badinage on the part of James, which she sometimes resented. There was no secret between them at all, only they never either of them spoke of Roland when others were present, save very slightly. And one day, James, in a mad mood, cut off a lock of Roland's hair, and sent it to his sister in a letter. She scolded him, but she kept it.

So the cloudless vacation went on—not one appearance of change. Nothing happened, save one, of the slightest importance, and that was only known to three people.

The Shrewsbury people must have a regatta, and Squire Evans and Squire Mordaunt being asked rather early for subscriptions, and being acted on by their boys, send very large ones, arousing the wrath of their political opponents and the emulation of their neighbours. Sir Jeremy Hicks and Sir Topham Shiner topped them at once, and the committee found themselves with half as much money again as they wanted. There was only one thing to be done: make a greater thing of it—a four-oared race for £5 cups, and a pair-oared race for similar cups open to all England.

Our young men had never thought of rowing, thinking there was nothing worthy of their skill, until the news of this came. It came first to the Evanses at breakfast, and Roland and Eddy were across the valley to the Mordaunts in ten minutes. *They* would row, of course, now it was no longer provincial: but old Maynard? Roland volunteered at once, before anything could be done, to ride across Longmynd to the Barton and see; and, in spite of Jim's prophecy, returned with Maynard to lunch, rather fat, but looking like rowing too.

Squire Charles Evans took the most intense interest in it. Devoted to every kind of sport, he had never seen any of this, now promising to be the most popular of all. He'd bear all the expense; he'd give them a handsome present all round if they won; he'd give a dinner to the tenantry: there was nothing he would not do. That evening Eddy was despatched to Oxford for a boat, with orders to see it home, and they discussed their plans.

These fellows had been carefully taught to row together for five years, and now had developed into four heavy men, perfectly accustomed to one another. They had rowed together often at the University also, but had only tried their strength in some college fours, which, of course, they won easily. They rowed thus: James, bow; John, second; Ox Maynard, third; and Roland, stroke. Eddy, coxswain (9st. 4lbs.) James Mordaunt, the lightest rower, 11st. 2lbs.

They found they went as well together as ever. After the first burst, they turned and looked at one another, and said, "That will do." The only question was, "Who was coming?"

They never went near Shrewsbury. They found a piece of the Severn, lower down and nearer Stretton, which was even better than the course. To this place every day went the drag, the Squire driving, with the crew and divers occasional gatherings: once Sir Jasper Meredith, who sneered at the whole thing, generally Mildred, or a servant or two. Aunt Eleanor and Ethel used to ride over, and trot along the tow-path, and the young men rowed none the slower for that. Several times, while rowing about—for they spent most of the day there—Roland made Mildred get in and steer, and once, to her awe and delight, with her hair broken down and

streaming like a flag, they took her raging all over the course at full speed. This was on a particular occasion when Eddy had to be elsewhere.

It was reported that two crews had come to Shrewsbury, and it was necessary that Eddy should go and look after them, and returned with a face blank with dismay. "This won't do, fellows," he said; "there's the London Rowing Club there."

"One of their scratch crews come pot-hunting," said Jim.

Eddy mentioned four names which made Roland whistle loud and long —some of the best names in the club. It was even so. Four club-oars were going to retire into real life this season, and being four old friends, thought they would see the last of it handsomely; and so, going on from regatta to regatta, from Barnes upwards, now found themselves at Shrewsbury in an amused frame of mind.

"I think we can manage the Manchester crew," said the London coxswain, laughing.

"There's a local crew of Bumpkins training down the river," said number two. "Do you know what they are like?"

"No! but I know their stroke's name, 'Evans,'—did you ever hear of him?"

"A youth to Henley and to fame unknown! Can't say I do."

"I'll tell you then," said stroke. "Evans is the man who won his university sculls by beating Hexam easily, and Hexam is the man who won the diamond sculls by beating *you*."

It was number two's turn to whistle now. "I wonder what sort of stuff he is sitting behind," he pondered.

"Pretty good, you may depend upon it," said stroke. "I wish we were fitter. Fancy getting picked up in a place like this! I shall emigrate if we are."

The Londoners easily beat the Manchester men; and soon after came down to join issue with their "dark" opponents, whose captain was the great sculler Evans, the young man who had beaten the last winner of the diamond sculls. They saw the Shropshire boat swinging up towards them, and they did not like it. Stroke said, between his teeth, to coxswain, "Picked up, by Jove!"

Our lads had not the least idea of winning against these well-known London names; and looked on them all, particularly stroke, as a countryman looks at Mr. Gladstone or Mr. Disraeli; for, not having been to Henley, they had never seen these mighty Londoners. And, indeed, they were worth looking at; set men, of about three or four-and-twenty, bearded, brown, with brown ribbed arms—it looked, size excepted, like David against the Philistines.

Roland guessed pretty well what the London tactics would be, and he was right. When the word was given, the Londoner went away like a whirlwind, with the hope of getting far enough before them to *wash* them —that is to say, to keep the other boat riding uneasily in their wash, taking off one-third of their pace, and so win by sheer desperate rowing. Roland, on his part, was determined that this should not happen, and, with his experience, was away so quick after the Londoner that he never really cleared the Shropshire boat. For three quarters of a mile the struggle went on in this way, and then condition began to tell: Roland began to gain. Eddy did not see it at first; and when he did, he whispered the fact to Roland, who never changed his stroke. Aunt Eleanor, who was riding on the tow-path with her brother, gave a somewhat unfeminine shout when she saw her beloved Eddy's boat steadily passing that of the London coxswain. The Squire, who rode with her

was in the wildest state of excitement.

A quarter of a mile from the post, the Shropshire boat had drawn fairly clear, and a little further the Londoners made one of those splendid efforts for which they are so famous; coming on with a rush, they completely headed the Shropshire boat, and the Squire's heart was in his mouth—he thought it was all over. But not so, Roland: crying out "Gloucester," he, for the first time, quickened his stroke, which was well responded to, and after a furious struggle (the Londoners rowing magnificently to the last), pushed the boat in half a length ahead. *

Shrewsbury roared aloud in the fulness of its joy. Here was a boat-ful of their own lads, Evanses, Mordaunts, Maynards, had beaten in fair fight five of the pick of London's rowing chivalry. They might well roar, and indeed they did; and in the middle of their roaring, the Squire laid his hand upon his sister's arm, and said, "Follow me, Eleanor, quick."

There was a narrow lane up to the hotel, and they pushed their horses up it. The yard was deserted, save by an ostler or two. Sliding off his horse, and followed quickly by Aunt Eleanor, who thought he looked strange, he went into a little parlour, and having shut the door, fainted away on a sofa.

She rang the bell, and did what she could for him. When the man came, she said "Doctor! quick! Don't make a fool of yourself and tell any one. Doctor, I tell you."

Before the Doctor came he had got sensible again, but was a little stupid and wandering. Eleanor took occasion to ask the Doctor what it was, and was it the sun?"

He said, "No, my dear Miss Evans. I had better trust you with the secret, but I would keep it from him: it is his *heart*."

So ended the Shrewsbury regatta, with these consequences, at least. The coachman drove the drag home, and the Squire thought he would sit inside, being tired; it was nothing. They rioted and shouted all the way home; and Mildred, sitting between Jim and her lover, was inexpressibly happy, and Eddy outshone himself. Ethel Mordaunt rode with Aunt Eleanor, and cast many a look up at the party on the drag, as though she would be glad to be there herself. But the Squire sat alone inside, dull in the reaction after the morning's terrible excitement, and thinking of many things past; and Aunt Eleanor rode along, very dull too, and wondering whether she had done right in promising to keep his illness from his wife.

He got perfectly well the next day, and no one was the wiser. But on the 12th he made excuses: the day was hot, the birds were well-grown and wild, he would find them at luncheon at the Cairn and chance a shot there, but Roland must take his gun in the morning.

This refusal of his to shoot seemed very much to impress Squire Mordaunt. They had shot together on the 12th for so many years now, that he knew there was a reason. Very often during the day he looked very pensively and curiously at Roland, and seemed a little guilty when discovered. He talked often to Roland, but in a constrained manner, as though leading up to a purpose, which Roland, who was as quick as lightning, saw in an instant.

What a singular delusion that is, talking *up* to an object, of *leading* the conversation towards your question! The feeblest intellect can detect the manœuvre, and the feebler the intellect the more cautious and reticent does it become from the mere instinct of self-preservation. Again,

* Those who saw the "Eton boys" win at Henley last year will see that there is no romance about this.

used towards a tolerably good intellect, this mode of gaining an answer produces irritation of the highest kind; it is an insult to the understanding. But perhaps what the Americans call the "highest old sport," in the way of conversation, is to hear an inferior intellect using this dodge towards a higher one.

It was soon evident to Roland that Squire Mordaunt was trying to lead up to something, but he could not find out *what*.

"Well shot, boy," old Mordaunt would say. "Ah, you should shoot well, you come of shooting stock. I suppose in your time, when it comes, you will keep up the old head of grouse, hey?"

"I don't like to anticipate that time, sir."

"Quite right! quite right!"

Then again, "We will take the south side of this glen, Roland. Knee-deep in fern, lad. Every acre would grow corn. Shall you, now, break any up?"

"I am very well as I am, sir. I have never thought of such things."

"You should. Suppose you had a lawsuit over your father's will, now, with Eddy. And there's Mildred's fortune—very large, I can tell you; and then there's your mother's jointure, very large. You won't be so very rich, I can tell you."

"I shall have enough for my wants," said Roland; "and, to tell you the truth, Mr. Mordaunt, my father has been such a kind and gentle friend and companion to me, that I shan't care much about taking possession."

"Very meritorious. You are a good fellow, Roland; I hope my boys are of the same opinion."

Roland could not make out his object at all, and had to be yet more puzzled.

"Bless me!" said Squire Mordaunt once again during the afternoon; "what tearaway young fellows you are now-a-days. Why there's young Redman: his mother has lost all her jointure in railway shares, and he has given her up the estate for life, and gone to Canada to make a fortune there."

"Happy fellow," said Roland. "I envy him. I'd a hundred times sooner have the making of a fortune than the spending of one."

Mr. Mordaunt pressed him no more, and meeting Squire Evans at lunch, they all talked and shot together, and Squire Mordaunt having dined with them, walked pensively home under the harvest-moon, and went straight to his study, and sat down in front of his escritoire with a candle.

"The boy," he mused, "will do well anywhere, if all goes against him. If all goes with him, however, he will be a poorish man. The defence of the Langley estate against the Bourden Langley claim took six years' rents. Whew! let us look at it again."

He took out a letter. Let us look at it:—

"SIR,—As a friend of the Evans family myself, I wish to inform you, as another friend of the family, of this very singular fact:—At the death of the present Mr. Charles Evans, the succession to the estates will be disputed.

"I know nothing, and can advise nothing. I only know that they are not going to move during the life of the present Squire; and, moreover, that they have a great deal of confidence. "Yours,

"NEMO."

"I don't like the look of it," said old Mordaunt. "These people have money behind them and a good case, to judge from our friend Nemo's letter. I don't like it; I shall ride over to old Eleanor."

CHAPTER XVI.

SEE broad and big Squire Mordaunt pensively riding, on a great brown horse, into the gate at Pulverbatch, under the dark elms, past the fish-ponds, up to Aunt Eleanor's front door. See his own daughter running out in her riding-habit to greet him, and making him bend down from his saddle for a "regular good hug." A pleasant sight!

"Why, puss," said her father, "I missed you at breakfast."

"I rode over here. She is necessary to me at times. She does me good."

"Stick to her, my girl. There are few like her. Where is she?"

"Out in the yard;" and having given up his horse, he followed his daughter until they came to the gate of a splendid deep-littered straw-yard, of great extent, hemmed in on all sides by various buildings, and on one side by a vast barn, as big as some cathedrals, from the open doors of which came a pleasant sound of thrashing.

Advancing slowly across the centre of the litter, in a short gown, with her back well in, and her head well up, a basket on her arm, came Miss Evans: heading a wedge-shaped procession. In front of her skimmed and hopped innumerable pigeons, about her feet and immediately behind her were the fowls—the hens "pawking" and gandering, the little ones losing their mothers in the crowd, and peeting shrilly when trodden on by the bigger ones; the cocks solemn and gallant. Then about forty little black Fisher Hobbes' pigs, shrieking wildly, and changing places until they looked like four hundred; then a dozen porkers, two calves, and four hrumphing old sows bringing up the rear. With this following, she approached the gate, and saluted Mordaunt—

"Well, George, and so you have found your way here once more?"

"I should come here more, if you did not scold me so."

"That's nonsense. I only scold you when you provoke me. How are you, old friend?"

And so, pleasantly chatting, these three went the tour of the farmyard, looking at all its wonderful order, thrift, and abundance. In the "woman's kingdom," which some say is coming, I, projecting my soul into the future, prophecy that a very great number of "disenthralled" women will become *farmers*, and, moreover, the very best of farmers. Even as they are now, with such education as they are allowed to scrape together, a vast number of women have every qualification which goes to make up a good farmer. Thrift, diligence, and attention to details are three qualifications which few, even now, will deny to the majority of women, and those three qualifications are one half the battle. Let them be instructed in the science of the matter, and that is not such a very difficult thing, and the instinct of order and management, so much higher in ordinary women than in ordinary men, will do the rest. Why are we always wanting (by advertisement) a "Lady Superintendent" for some institution or another? Why cannot a "limited hotel" get on without a "Lady Manager?" Look at the duties of a great nobleman's housekeeper; and then tell me that a well-trained, clear-headed woman would not make a better farmer than one half of the ill-educated, narrow-minded men who have got the land. Why, one of the best-managed farms, some 14,000 acres—mind you, in Victoria—was kept by two old maiden ladies: and for that matter, Eleanor Evans is no ideal personage.

"I wish I could make my farm pay like this," said Squire Mordaunt, pensively. "I lost a thousand pounds

the last two years. If it was not for my wife keeping things so well in hand in the housekeeping, I should be pinched to keep the boys at the university.

"Why don't you give the farm up to her, then?" asked Eleanor; "then you might go on with your fox-hunting, and your game-preserving, and your politics, and your magistrate's work, with an easy mind. A farm takes a man's or woman's whole time and energy, and here you put ten irons in the fire, leaving the poor farm to the last, and then come crying to me because you lose money over it. Come in."

They went into Eleanor's long, dark room, and she put down her hat and her egg-basket, and taking a particular pencil from a particular place on her desk, began writing a date on each of the eggs, as she handed them to her aide-de-camp, Ethel, who meanwhile had opened a long drawer—one of a dozen in an old oak press; the drawers were half filled with oats, and in these oats Ethel carefully placed every egg, in the succession in which it was handed to her.

"There," Eleanor said, when it was done; "I suppose you are too fine a gentleman to do *that?*"

Mordaunt confessed it.

"I thought as much," said Eleanor, triumphantly; "and you talk of farming! Why, by this simple detail, and by never trusting the eggs into my servants' hands, I average ten chicks out of every sitting of thirteen; and, in spite of your bothering foxes, which I, not having had my warnings attended to, mean most persistently to trap, I made £97 last year out of my fowls alone, clear profit. What does your pork which you eat cost you?"

"I never made any exact calculation," said Squire Mordaunt, drily. "I got up to 8*s.* a pound once, and then I dropped it. I want to speak to you."

"Then, Ethel, my love, go and get the garden report together for me, as your father is going to waste my time. (Ethel went out.) I am sick and tired of you men. I don't know what you were brought into the world for. And then, if things go wrong, it is always *us*. Now, what is the matter?"

"You did not always think so of men, dear Eleanor," said Squire Mordaunt.

"And don't now, my dear George. Ah, it is a long while since *that*. Where is your brother?"

"In India still."

"Ah, well! George, remember that no one but you and I know that only tender passage in my life. Keep my secret."

"It is not much of a one, Eleanor. He made you think that he loved you when he did not. And you talk of it being the only tender passage in your life! Why, your life is a piece of music made up of tender passages. But here, I am uneasy, and I have come to you as having the clearest head in your family. Read this," and he put before her the anonymous letter.

She read it twice very carefully, and then she folded it up, and said: "This is very serious and very annoying, indeed."

"Have you any idea what it means?"

"Oh, yes! I know well enough what it means. It means twenty thousand pounds worth of law, and very likely a sequestration of the estate *pendente lite*. You were called to the bar once—that is good law language, is it not?"

"I have forgotten my law," said Mordaunt, "but that don't see tom ring true somehow. However, I understand what you mean, which I probably should not if you stated it correctly. What is it all about?"

"Oh, it is the old Cecil Evans's claim on the estate, dormant now for

forty years. It was last made when our father came into the estate. His father died without a will, and our father inherited: and then up gets one Cecil Evans and claims to inherit as eldest legitimate son. He abandoned his suit after a short time, publishing everywhere that it was only from want of funds. Indeed, I remember to have heard it said that many thought him ill-used. He went to Australia, where they have made mints of money, and are now far richer than we are; and now they are going to spend some of it in trying to turn us out."

"Have they a good claim?"

"Good enough to cost a deal of money. But it was always said that we had papers which would checkmate them. Old Morgan, our solicitor, is alive still. Let us communicate with him; he knows all about it."

"Shall we tell Charles?"

"*Certainly not*, unless they move before his death. I have my reasons for not telling Charles."

"They should be good ones."

"They *are* good ones. I tell you it would kill him in a week," said Eleanor.

"Has he been ill?"

"Yes! Between ourselves, he had a very dangerous attack the day of that silly regatta. Let us go to old Morgan."

"Well, we will agree to it," said Mordaunt. "What was the name of the man who—you know what I mean—before my brother?"

"Georgy Rolston," said Aunt Eleanor, frankly. "I wonder what has become of *him*, for instance."

"He is Dean of St. Paul's," said Mordaunt; "the very man who is looking after our boys."

CHAPTER XVII.

ALL things must end, even a long vacation; and the yellowing leaves began to tell of separation. But what are changes under such circumstances as we find here, with youth, health, and wealth? only changes from one form of pleasure to another. The mothers and the sisters, saddened at the parting, listened to the young men's talk; it consisted only in anticipations of pleasures even greater than those of home. They were glad enough to get away, as they had been glad enough to come.

With regard to young James Mordaunt, however, it was very difficult to see whether he was glad or sorry at the change. He spoke with intense pleasure of his return to the University, and of the various things they would do, yet he was distraught, melancholy, and by no means himself: and no explanation could be offered of the change in him, except that he had fallen in love with somebody.

Since Roland had been spoken to on these matters by the downright Mordaunt, his conduct had been most discreet; he had never flirted with Mary Maynard—when any one was by; and as for Ethel Mordaunt, he had treated her like her sister, only with more profound consideration.

They had all left their college in early summer, full of anticipations of home; and now they returned to the college, full of anticipations of an agreeable change from the perpetual sunshine weather of home; and the change after all was a failure to them. The great, first attraction of one of the old English Universities, is the entire and perfect freedom from restraint during the time when the youth is as much a schoolboy as ever. On the return after the first long vacation, this is almost always gone, and the individuality of the man begins to show. The man is not merely a cricketing, or boating, or tart-eating schoolboy; not merely the gregarious creature of whom you can scarcely find five separate types in a school of five hundred; he begins to show what individuality there is in him; begins, when thrown on himself, to show what he is likely to be in the future.

The most empty and frivolous of lads; the lad who has spent his first year in doing all that he has been forbidden to do, drinking and smoking more than is good for him, ordering things which he does not want, but which must be paid for, finds out this; for no human soul was ever satisfied with new waistcoats, and fresh jewellery for long. He gathers these choice

flowers still, but the bloom and scent are gone, and he merely goes on doing it because he has begun; and becomes, in his third year, if he lasts as long, a miserable and unhappy spectacle, entering on the ministry of a church which requires a clear head and a bold heart for her service, a *blasé*, heedless man, often deeply in debt, sighing regretfully, up to the latest moment before that Trinity Sunday which is to alter his life for ever, for the fleshpots of Egypt. With him we have little to do; these lads of ours had little in common with him, yet they felt that the University was not as it had been.

There was certainly some little pleasure at meeting such few friends as they had; but this did not last long. The river, which they all loved, was not the same, with its broken reeds and muddy banks, as it was in bright June. They took their four down, and rowed as splendidly as ever; but it was in a perfunctory way, and Roland was a little cross at the observation which they attracted, and demanded of Eddy the innocent, whether they could not go down the river like others without being watched. The four-oared races were rowed that term, which made Roland the more petulant; and the first day, seeing certain men prepared to run up with them, he rowed like fury over three-quarters of the course, and then eased, turned, and rowed down again, giving these gentlemen their run for their trouble. The University was a failure as far as boating went. "What rot it is!" he said in the barge. "I could find four water men here on the shore, who could give us a hundred yards, and row round us."

"You are beginning to find *that* out," said Sir Jasper Meredith, laughing at him. "Didn't I always tell you so? You are a fine fellow, Roland; but you have neither the pluck nor the dexterity to sweep a chimney."

"I'll bet your life I'll sweep any chimney in the University I can get into," replied Roland, in a loud voice.

"Leave him alone, Meredith," said old Mordaunt, or "he'll do it. He has got out of bed the wrong side, and will make a fool of himself in any way you may name, if you will only defy him."

"True, O king," said Roland, laughing, in good humour. "Well, what shall we do till hall?"

Jemmy Mordaunt, in a stolid sententious manner, looking nowhere, with his head in the air, suggested that they should go up street together, have ices, and look at trouser-patterns for Sunday morning. "We used to like it well enough four months ago," he said; "of course we should like it now."

Sir Jasper Meredith laughed, winked, and said, "He has read you the lesson, that young bull. Take hold of me, will you, and carry me somewhere out of this. Are you going to take me over the plank, old Mordaunt? Well, old Mordaunt, and what do you say to it all?"

Old Mordaunt was far too wise to say anything. He grinned, however, as he deposited Meredith with his servant. Nothing more.

There was a ghost of a revival of the old days among them that night. They were quietly together in the Evans' rooms, when it occurred to James Mordaunt to take strong objections to Eddy Evans' recent conduct, on many grounds. There was no new specific charge at once, but a number; and James put it that he was getting objectionable in many ways. That he was steering badly, talked loudly in the street, ate too much and too fast, slopped his drink about at dinner, talked while he was chewing, and scraped his plate with his knife. This, of course, as was usual, ended in denials and recriminations, in which Eddy used language towards James, which of course ended

in a fight; or to speak more truly, in a blind, aimless, innocent romp between the two lads. Unluckily, however, even the old fun fell worse than dead, for Eddy, having laughed all the wind out of him, as he afterwards explained, fell rather heavily under James Mordaunt, and made his head bleed. They did not fall so light as in the old times. Poor Edward would have cried if he had been still a boy; but it was their last romp together.

Old Mordaunt had started a pipe, the first of the set who did so, and puffing it, he said, "You two must give up skylarking. You are getting too old and too strong. All that has passed away. Eh, Roland?"

They put down their names for the Greek prose lecture, because the Dean still had it, but only for his sake. The Dean's eyes brightened when they came in, and they brightened up also when they saw their good friend.

But it was all as dead as ditch-water. Maynard, the ox-like, who never said anything, but went his ways through the world without exciting himself (saving when he quickened his perfectly rowed oar to the motion of Roland's back), now was the brightest of them all. Their old world had become dead to them. Before him a new, bright, and most beautiful world was about to open. The Dean knew why, and was not surprised; but he was surprised that this good, handsome, not over clever lad should shine so brightly beside the four others, so much brighter and cleverer than he. "The mere fact of a lad's going to be married next Christmas," said the Dean to himself, "need not make all *that* difference. There is something wrong in these Gloucester boys."

Maynard had never been a great favourite of the Dean's. He had thought him lumpish and rather stupid, though his scholarship was high for that college. The Dean had very little society in his college, being by far the best man there, and the tattle of the common-room was distasteful to him. Consequently he spent far too much of his time in his own rooms among his books.

But books will not last a man always. The eye gets physically wearied of print in time, and when that happens, a man should have society among his own equals. In his own college the Dean had none. His old friends were dropping one by one from the University, and the few who were left were changed in many ways, and the Dean was a lonely man. So it came about that in the dull long nights, when the college was asleep, he had got into an unfortunate habit of summing up his own case against destiny. A most unhealthy habit indeed.

Here was his case against destiny. He was the son of a poor clergyman, but a splendid scholar. His father had carried everything before him in the way of University honours, and had then thrown everything, his fellowship, his chances of promotion, in every way to the dogs, by marrying a young lady to whom he was promised, and by declining on a small curacy, where his scholarship was a mere incumbrance. He had then got a small living, and had just lived long enough to get his boy (the Dean) nominated to a good public foundation. After which he died, leaving his wife with £100 a year of her own, and £1500 on a life insurance policy.

This £1500 was devoted to the Dean's education: money seldom went further. At school the boy carried everything before him, spending as little as possible, and spending nothing without consultation with his mother. "I must be a great man," he said to her. "I have abilities for it; and I must show among boys and men as a gentleman, and not as a *scrub*. If you will trust

me, mother, I will invest this money at cent. per cent." And she trusted him; and was he not now enjoying an income of £700 a year from a capital of £1500? He did all he had ever said he would do, and his mother lived in wealth, happiness, and pride; talking of her son, the Dean, among the gossips, as though he were Dean of Durham, and waiting calmly for the time, now soon to come, when he would be head of his house, and Vice-Chancellor, walking, in scarlet cloth and velvet, among princes, warriors, scholars of all nations, with six silver maces before him, conferring honours upon them all. Good lady! her heart swelled with an unutterable pride, as she in her imagination rehearsed her behaviour as mother of the Vice-Chancellor, when all the sages from the east and from the west, from Berlin to Harvard, should be taking their honours from the hands of her son.

Could he destroy it all by telling her that he was a miserable and disappointed man; that he had missed his aim in life; that the world she thought so great was so unutterably small to him; that his deanery of the college was merely in his eyes the situation of an over-paid bear-leader; that the position of proctor, in which she had rejoiced so much, was an office utterly loathsome and degrading to him, which he had fulfilled so ill and so unwillingly, that he was cheered to the echo by all the worst of the undergraduates at the end of his term; and that his name was even now remembered as that of the "good proctor?" Could he tell her that there were times now, when he recalled what he had meant to be, which made him say to himself in his bitterness that he would as soon be carried through the streets as Guy Fawkes, as walk through them as Vice-Chancellor? No; he could not tell all this to her, or to anyone; though as the evening which followed the first day of the term closed in, these thoughts came crowding on him as thick as ever, nay thicker. He would not face the long night alone. He rang his bell, and sent his servant to quest Mr. Maynard to sup with him at nine o'clock.

Then he set all his doors open, and walked up and down through all his rooms, from one end to the other still putting his case against the world. How came it that he was tied here by the leg, an inevitable head of a house, an equally inevitable Vice-Chancellor in his turn, while the great world, in which he could have shone, went spinning on and leaving him and his ideas behind? Could he have escaped, the very name of his college would have been a drag and a shame to him in those days. And his holy orders, forced on him by the rules of his house—there was a bar. His head grew hot as he thought of that, as it always did; for the Dean had opinions which he kept to himself, but which even the breadth of the National Church could scarcely hold. And he was an honest man. If he had ten thousand a year to-morrow, *Parliament* was closed to him. He put that thought under his feet, and stamped on it.

"Get," said a very pleasant voice, "a bishopric. With your political power, not so very difficult." And he said to himself, "That was very neatly put, my dear friend in black. Fancy if it was to come to *that!*" And as he said it, he grew pale and trembled. And then he went into his innermost chamber and knelt before a chair; but he had scarcely knelt a minute before he cast the chair from him, and began his walk again, singing what he was apt to sing a little too often when his scepticism was strongest, and his consequent cynicism greatest—

"There was turning of keys and creaking of locks,
And he took forth a bait from the iron box.

Many the cunning sportsman tried,
Many he flung, with a frown, aside,
Jewels of lustre, robes of price,
Tomes of heresy, loaded dice.
At length was a perfume of sulphur and nitre,
As he came, at last, to a Bishop's Mitre."

"Well, it has not come to that yet. Let me forget! If I had only had ten thousand pounds, and if she had not been a fool,—God bless her!—it might have been different. Let us prepare for this young bridegroom.

A bitter, cynical tongue had the good Dean, well known in lecture, in common-room, and in senate-house: a man who had made many enemies by his stinging, quiet sarcasm. Some of those enemies would have given money to have seen him now, forty-five years of age, and in a wig gathering flowers out of his little terrace garden by candle-light, and bringing them in, and laying them on the table, sorting them out and putting them in a vase. Poor old Dean!

His next act was much more Don-like, and less sentimental. He took his bunch of keys from his pocket, and unlocked his escritoire, and from a second place in it took another key. And even while holding that key in his hand, he did another strange thing, not to be believed by senate-house or hebdomidal board. Pulling aside a pile of neatly docketed papers, —which were, indeed, so many lamentable efforts of Greek prose, all to be waded wearily through in the course of the week,—he took out an old bundle of letters tied together, in the tie of which was stuck an old rose. Going to the table, he took the best fresh geranium he could find, and put it in beside the rose, and laying down the letters beside the Greek exercises, scratched his head in deep thought, and in doing so scratched his wig off.

It fell impartially, like the rain, on the Greek exercises, the letters, the rose and the geranium, and looked up at him, as only a wig *can* look. With an air of vivacious effrontery, as though it would say, "You and I are fine fellows; but must pull together; we are nothing apart." The Dean scratched his bare head, and said, with a sigh, "Ah! it is too late for all that now."

The sudden entry of his servant caused him to lock up his escritoire very rapidly, and to lock his wig inside, with his love-letters and the other witnesses of his folly. Turning to scold his servant, he caught sight of himself in the glass, and scolded not. He undid the escritoire, and taking out his wig, put it on in the presence of his servant, and going with his key to his most sacred wine-bin, took out a very particular bottle of wine, saying to himself, "This will unloose his tongue, at all events."

In came supper,—a most delicate, light little supper, for the good Dean had learnt in his seclusion to know the pleasures of good eating, and had indeed sent two of the young men in the kitchen, at various times and at his own expense, to his London club for instruction. In came Maynard, beautifully dressed, looking splendid, with a geranium in his button-hole. The servant was sent away, the oak sported, and Maynard the simple was left undefended, to be pumped by this wily old Dean.

"You won't find any beer here, Maynard," said the Dean. "These vivers are too good to be washed down by that infernal compound of malt, hops, and raw beef, which is good for nothing but to irritate the temper, and the consumption of which accounts for so much of our national history. You will find a bottle of White Hermitage beside you: don't be afraid of it. I have my half-pint of Beaune, as you see. A young stomach like yours should be able to stand hashed venison (not Magdalen, my dear youth, but Arundel) and Hermitage.

Maynard made some respectful re-

ply, and they supped like gods; and when thoroughly refreshed, moved to the fire, with their wine between them.

"And so," said the Dean, "you are to marry Miss Evans, at Christmas."

Maynard's sober tongue was thoroughly loosened by drinking White Hermitage as though it were beer, and he thought the Dean an uncommonly friendly, gentlemanly fellow, and very handsome too.

He replied, without the least sheepishness, that such was the case, and received the Dean's congratulations with respectful dignity.

"If you will allow me, we will drink to the bride-elect," said the Dean. And down the throat of the innocent Maynard went another quarter of a pint of the White Hermitage.

"A handsome family," said the Dean. "At least, judging from Roland, I should say so. Eddy is ugly, certainly; but one might almost predicate of him that his inseparable accident would be pretty sisters."

"You think Eddy ugly, sir?"

"Decidedly, I should say. A weak, silly, frivolous little being, but very amiable."

"I assure you, sir," said Maynard of the loosened tongue, "that you are quite mistaken. Eddy has quite as much go in him as Roland."

The Dean laughed, and put the question by. "The Evanses are very rich, are they not? you get wealth as well as beauty and wit by this match, I hear."

"No," said Maynard. "I have a large property. She only has five thousand at present."

"Indeed! By-the-by, did I dream it, or is there not some of the Evans' property alienated?"

"Not that I am aware of," said Maynard. "I settle two farms on her for pin-money. In case of my death, she has everything, barring my mother's jointure and my sister Mary's little fortune. There never has been any question of money. Why should there?"

"Of course not," said the Dean. "I am clumsy in my inquiries. I wanted to know whether there was not some of the Stretton property alienated—on your old aunt, I mean."

"Aunt Eleanor!" said Maynard.

"Exactly," said the Dean, settling himself. "The very person. Fill your glass, and tell me all about her. I knew something about these Evanses in old, old times, and I remember this Miss Evans. She has taken to woman's rights, farms her own land, goes shooting, and goes to market, does she not? She was pretty at one time—what is she like now?"

"Aunt Eleanor," said Maynard, solemnly, "is one of the most beautiful women you ever saw in your life, sir; and if there is an angel on earth, it is she."

"Pity she did not marry," said the Dean, whistling.

"There never walked a man in shoes good enough for her, sir; and that is why she did not marry. As for her estates, which she certainly farms, they would be defined by Mr. Hallam as an appanage in her mother's right, in no way influencing the succession, or in any way at the mercy of the main hereditary branch. They are at her own disposal."

"Hang Mr. Hallam!" said the Dean, fearing that Maynard had drunk so much Hermitage that he would get sententious instead of communicative, "Why did she not marry?"

"You must ask my mother that story, sir," said Maynard.

"Come, you know it;" said the Dean, "and you may as well tell it. Do you ever smoke a cigar?"

There was no hesitation in Maynard's confidence after this.

"Miss Evans," he said, "had once a proposal from a man whom she greatly esteemed, and to whom, my mother says, she had shown the most

marked partiality. To the great astonishment of her most intimate friends, she refused him so emphatically that he retired, and was seen in that part of the country no more."

"Aye, indeed!" said the Dean, "a poor-spirited fellow. Well; and did she ever give any reasons for her unreasonable conduct?"

"They became apparent to a few; although she esteemed the first man, there was one she esteemed more; in fact, she refused the first man in favour of another."

"And is yet unmarried!"

"Yes; the man was a soldier, and had shown her great attention; but the one word was never spoken by him, and he went away and married another. It was disappointment and a feeling of humiliation in having given away her heart and not having it accepted, which prevented her from ever marrying."

"Still handsome," said the Dean, thoughtfully.

"Still beautiful," said Maynard; and took his leave.

The Dean, sitting before the fire, said, "She had better have had me before I had to wear a wig; but it is too late now." And there was no one to care what the Dean said, so he took off his wig and went to bed.

Nothing is easier than to go to bed; but few things, at times, are more difficult than going to sleep. The Dean found that out. As soon as he was in the dark, he began thinking. If I were to write down all that he thought about, you would certainly not read it. I can only give you the results.

"Eleanor still handsome, and I a bald old man in a wig: though I am only her age, when all is said and done. I have a good mind to go down and see her; but, perhaps, I had better send my wig, to let her see how things stand. She has taken to all kind of things, why the dickens hasn't she taken to socialism? Then she might turn her estates into a Phalanstery, and I would join her with my money, get her to marry me, and burst it all up triumphantly. After such nonsense as that, I know I must be going to sleep."

But he was not. After a full hour he was broad awake enough to say, "What did I ever do to K—— that he should have sent these outrageous young Bedlamites to *me*, and so arouse my interest in her again? There will be mischief among those boys. K—— licked them into shape; he would lick any *boy* into shape I ever saw. But boys have an ugly trick of growing into men; as they are. And one single pretty woman would play the deuce among the lot of them."

Finding that this consideration did not make him more sleepy, the good Dean arose, and putting on his wig and some clothes, buckled to at the Greek prose exercises: which had the desired effect. For he fell asleep over them, and nearly burnt down the college, but only in reality burnt his wig.

As he had not got a lock of hair on his head to send as a specimen of colour, the leading barber of that town sent him the closest match he could: a bright red wig, made for a gentleman commoner of scrofulous tendency, of St. Vitus' College, who had had his head shaved for *delirium tremens;* the only wig without grey let into it which the barber had in stock. The Dean took it and wore it, to the delight of the undergraduates; for a red wig was better than a grey one.

"If my confounded hair had stayed on my head," he thought, "things would have been different. I am only her age." And so he made himself ridiculous by wearing the red wig. If any one else had done it, he would have murdered them with sarcasm. But no man knows what an ass he is when he is in love.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A VERY long foreseen confusion now occurs in this story. If the kind reader has been patient enough to notice the fact, he will perceive that not one of the people whom I have tried to present to him in an amiable light had been doing anything at all. The energetic Gray, the most active among our characters, hitherto had been only vegetating. There had come no question between him and the world. Aunt Eleanor's chief glory was in her plan of sowing white rock stubble turnips, and fighting Mr. Martin Sutton. As for the boys, they had been doing rather less than nothing. Sir Jasper Meredith, having now attained his majority, had built some cottages, but finding a return of scarcely one per cent., had gone off into doctrinaire radicalism, and had screeched his commonplaces of supply and demand into the ear of a sympathizing vestry, who said that they always knew that no Meredith was the man to raise the rates on them. But none of them had done anything.

The whole lot of them would have slept through life, and awakened wondering in eternity, had it not been for a *bouleversement* in affairs, which brought out the industrial character of all.

We must follow our boys first. In spite of the cynical croaking of Sir Jasper Meredith, these boys held together, with Roland as their captain. In those old times men could row and read at the same time. Witness an Oxford eight at Putney, in 1852, with two first-class men in her. Now we have changed all that; it matters not, I am only speaking of the past. In the four-oared races of the October term, Brasenose, with the splendid fury which seems to be a *specialite* of that college, rowed down every crew in succession, until they were thrown, in the last terrible heat, against St. Paul's, manned by our five boys. Brasenose, with the Berkshire shore, raged away ahead, in the style which few men can approach. But when the Gut was passed, the steady steam-engine style of the Gloucester boys began to tell. Eddy Evans, sitting like a little Memnon in the stern, merely nodded to his brother to quicken the stroke. Roland did so, and was answered by the crew as one man. The magnificent rage of Brasenose was as nothing. Opposite the Cherwell, Eddy tickled his boat over in front of them, and washed them, and there was an end of the old *régime*; no more boating for them. One or two of them, in after times, and in subdued voices, disputed whether they had got more harm than good out of it. At all events, there was an end and finish of it.

Three days afterwards the Moderation lot were out, and Roland and the elder Mordaunt figured in the first class.

The very next Thursday, at the Union, Lord Eustace Vanderbilt made his great Radical speech, in which he demonstrated, to the satisfaction of the majority, that Christianity and democracy were identical; that the only true formulas of Christianity were to be found in the traditions of the Church; and that, therefore, the only true democracy would be found in the formulas of the High Church party. Lord Eustace was clever, and had a vast deal to say for his theory; as well as any one else has who takes it up. But the instant he sat down, Roland was up and at his throat. Old Mordaunt, who was sitting beside him, growled out to him, from time to time, to "draw it mild," but Roland scorned him.

"Priestcraft and democracy!" he cried. "Who is he that publishes the banns of that adulterous marriage? Who is this man who sits there with brazen forehead, and talks this blasphemy? The great grand-

son of the favourite of William the Third, who would have struck his degraded successor to the earth if he had heard his atrocious sentiments. (Order, order.) It was well to cry order; it was a most excellent and admirable thing to cry order, when an honest English country gentleman denounced a renegade Dutchman, pampered as his family had been, and rewarded as his family had been, for turning to and talking mere Sacheverellism, or worse." Roland also was at a loss to conceive what this young nobleman expected to gain by it, and took about half an hour in trying to find out: during which he tore the Constitution to tatters, gave his opinion of the Church pretty strongly; and called the house to witness the state of things we had been brought to: which, with a rapidly civilizing population of nearly two hundred millions, the possession of the principal naval keys of all seas, and a surplus of three millions, was scarcely an easy matter.

Then finding, like most young speakers, that he was wide of his subject, he harked back to it as well as he could. "What did the noble lord want? what did the noble lord mean? If the noble lord meant that the only form of pure democracy was Christianity directed by priests, he would fight that noble lord to the last drop of his blood. If, on the other hand, the noble lord meant merely that pure primitive Christianity meant pure democracy, he would take the noble lord to his bosom." Then he rambled on, missing his central point oftener than he hit it, and ended by doing what all inexperienced speakers do, twaddling off into a thin end of nothing at all. One of the greatest and most important accomplishments required for public speaking, is to know when to leave off. To speak for an hour on a proposition, to keep your audience interested all the time, and then to round up your speech with your original proposition, claiming to have proved it, is not an easy thing. The only receipt for doing so which I know of, is to believe in your proposition, and speak the truth.

Old Mordaunt then rose, and deprecated personalities; denounced the habit of reducing an argument from the general to the particular; and committed himself to the statement that there were few men in the world whose hearts were more entirely in accord, on the whole, than those of his friend Roland Evans and the noble lord opposite. "He did not happen himself," he said, "to agree with either of the honourable members, because he happened to be a Tory. He was very sorry for it; but Tory he was. Lord Eustace Vanderbilt would observe that his family had been Tories centuries before any Dutchman had heard the word Whig. He supposed it was bred in the bone, and would come out in the flesh. Still he had the highest honour for his friend Roland Evans, and for his family. Had it not been for the Evans family, he, Mordaunt, could never have appeared there. At the time when the noble lord's (Vanderbilt's) family were cowering like whipped hounds under the lash of the Spaniard, his (Mordaunt's) family had been busy at every kind of Popish sedition; in which he gloried. The Evans family, having persistently taken the winning side, that of Protestantism, had always brought the Mordaunt family through, and he would stick to them now. He stuck to his friend Roland, by saying that his language was indecent and indiscreet, even towards a mere mushroom Dutch interloper, and that he could not have meant what he said." After which, he sat down suddenly, and preserved an ox-like silence.

Such an astounding breach of all possible good manners paralysed the assembly. As for old Mordaunt, he had done what he wanted—roused

Roland; and he sat quite still. "I want to see how he will get out of a scrape," he said to the little wizened form of a man who nestled beside him. He insulted the man, and I have driven the insult home."

Lord Eustace Vanderbilt and Roland were on their legs at the same time; both white with wrath. The President hammered for order, and they obeyed him; before either had spoken, a thin, cracked little voice, piercing shrill, was heard, and the Union turning towards it, saw that it proceeded from Sir Jasper Meredith.

"Sir," he cried, "I rise—if such an unhappy and miserably formed eidolon as I can be said to rise—to order. Sir, it would be foolish in you to deny the fact, that two of our best men have quarrelled personally, and have interchanged insults. I beg you to give me time for speech, sir—I beg you and the assembly to forgive any want of consecutiveness in my argument; for if you, Mr. Fitzgerald, were the shattered wreck which I am, your sentences would not run so smooth, and your logic would not be so perfect. I cry for your pardon, sir, and I cry for theirs. Please listen to me, you two; though I shake and tremble with fear at speaking in public. You two mean the same thing; why quarrel over details and personalities? I beg you to make friends. The hot words which you have said to one another will fester to all eternity, if you do not recall them. Forget and forgive, you two. Forget and forgive everything, and go on hand in hand towards the amelioration of our country. You two, in your youth, strength, and beauty, look at me, staggering meanly here before you. I have forgiven the wicked old past, which has brought me to this. Forgive you, in like manner, and cast no words abroad about Cavalier and Roundhead, about Defoe and Sacheverell. Agree!"

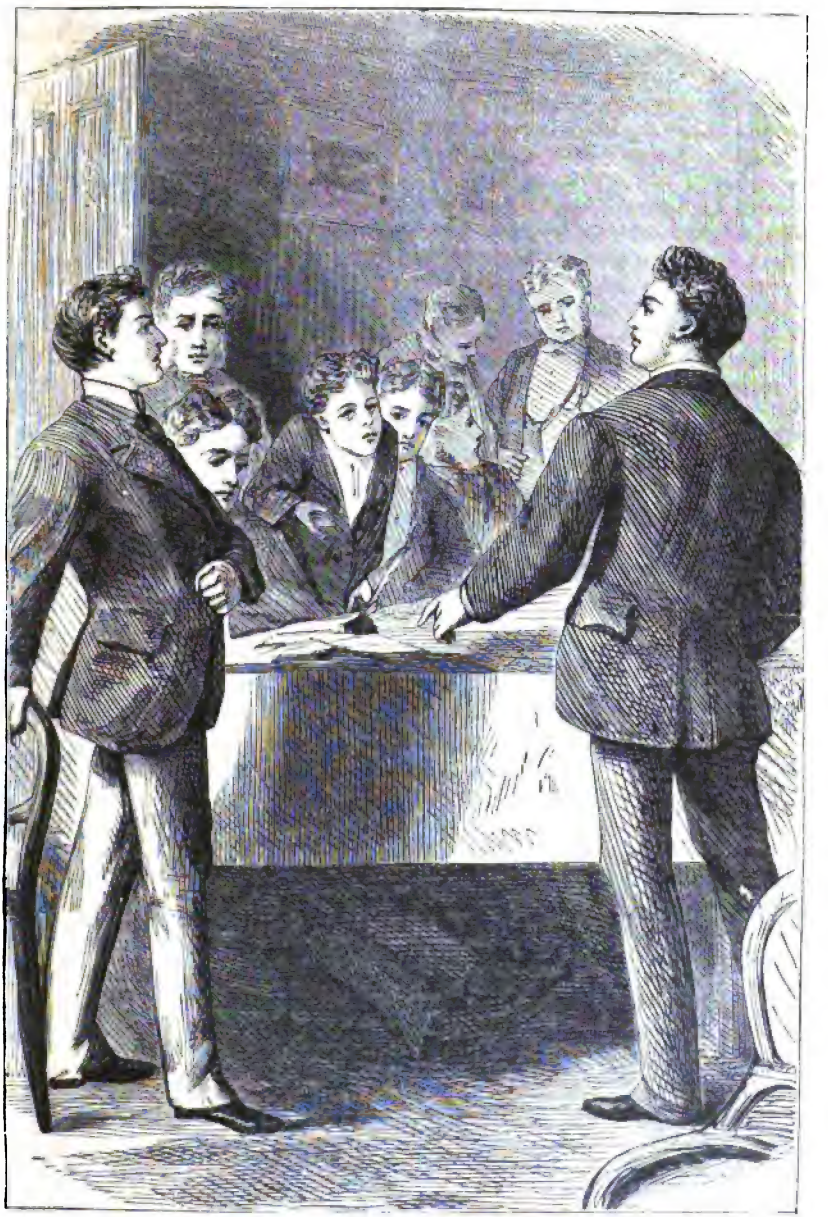
Said old Mordaunt. "He is a worse speaker than I am; and I am bad enough." Yet, no. That strange little cripple, bad and illogical as his speech was, touched the heart of the assembled boys. His splendid head, superimposed on the shambling heap of bones, was striking enough; his rugged, almost inconsecutive, speech did the rest. When he cowered back, and lay once more on old Mordaunt's shoulder, the house was clamorous for a reconciliation between Roland and Lord Eustace Vanderbilt.

It was solemnly made. Roland and Lord Eustace shook hands, and Sir Jasper Meredith shrunk close to the shoulder of old Mordaunt, saying, "You did right to rouse him. But we shall never know the best of him; he has too much money.

CHAPTER XIX.

So began the end of the old *régime*. That was the very last glimpse that our boys had of a British University. They had been educated as rich boys are educated, at a public school and at a University. The time comes now, when, by a series of accidents, they were cast into the world. Will you bear with me while I sum up their qualifications for fighting that same world?

Roland. With regard to Roland's rowing, there has never been I believe but one opinion. It was unapproachable. Roland rowed before the new art of "catching" the water at the beginning of your stroke, and rowing so many strokes a minute, came in fashion. Roland rowed like Coombes, his master; diligently observing the rule to "catch" nothing, but to imitate, as far as possible, the motion of a steam-engine. Roland, with his Maynard and his Mordaunt between him, and Eddy steering, won everything. I only mention his rowing powers first, as a tribute to the genius of the age. I have now to descend to the unimportant fact of his scholarship.



I suppose I ought to apologize for doing anything so vulgar, or so commonplace. Yet we are a practical people, and the French say a money-loving people. Roland's education had cost the change out of £1,500 already. He had been the favourite boy of one of the most successful masters of modern times. He so far differed from the ordinary public schoolboy of these times, that he could have got into Balliol, or taken his degree when he left school. It was not necessary for his father to spend two hundred pounds on a coach, before he could pass his matriculation, and another hundred before he could pass his "little go". He was a very favourable specimen. He could have competed with the head-boys from Cheltenham or Marlborough, just then coming into existence—in classics. The question is—what did he know?

He could do a better piece of Greek prose than, probably, any man in the House of Commons, in the Chamber of Deputies, or in Congress. His Greek prose was so good, that there were scarcely two dozen men in England who could correct it.

He could translate any Greek book, let it be what it would, elegantly and correctly. Erasmus and his friends, or Milton, were scarcely better classics at his age. He was a young lion. In the *vivâ voce* part of his examination, a middle-aged Moderator, fresh from the country, got frightened at him, and sought safety in flight. Roland, standing on the other side of that dreadful table in those Divinity schools, there and then, under the most beautifully decorated roof in England, corrected and shut up that Moderator.

Then his "science." He could reel you off the limits of human knowledge. He could pick you out the few queer places in his Aldrich, and pour out the vials of his contempt over the "logic" of the late Archbishop of Dublin. At the Union he had got on his legs, and utterly demolished the "science" of Emerson, showing that he had not mastered the mere grammar of his art.

Then in Divinity. He would as lief read you his Bible in Greek as in English, and had made numerous emendations in Pickering's notes. His essay on the miraculous draught of fishes, in which he clearly proved that they were Thymalli and not Cyprinidæ (in which he was quite wrong) was printed. And he could say half the articles by heart, including the somewhat difficult one on Predestination, which James Mordaunt called the article on Pedestrianism.

I have now come to the end of my hero's accomplishments. He was destined for Parliament, and would have educated himself there, and done well there. I acknowledge that he had learnt how to learn, and that when the world had shown him what it was necessary to know, that he would have learned it. But let me tell you what he did not know.

He knew nothing of the history of his own country. He could tell you of common-places about a Spartan Hegemony, but the Fox and North coalition was news to him. Before the catastrophe came, he had scarcely, from the most ordinary sources, put himself in possession of the most ordinary facts in English history.

About physical science, he was absolutely and perfectly ignorant. For this we can scarcely blame him. Mr. Lewes, and another, whom family reasons prevent my naming, had not then brought science to our doors. Darwin and Huxley were watching the wonders of God in the deep sea, and had not got epitomized. Mrs. Sabine had not translated the Cosmos, which brings us to the fact that Roland was entirely unable to read the Cosmos in the original German. Not to mince matters, that he was practically ignorant of every mo

language. He might have gone on the grand tour, and have come back not much wiser than he went. The bright, agreeable Frenchman, with his bright, half false ideas (always, however, containing a half truth), and the slow, wise German, were alike dumb dogs to him. Outside this small, over-populated island of ours, the world was a dead black blank to him: those very admirable fellows, Fritz and Alphonse, having no language to speak to him but that of the eyes. If you turn on me and say that Fritz and Alphonse might have taken the trouble to learn the language of Shakespeare, I can only retort that they did not and won't. I also ask you whether, after the above summing-up of Roland's accomplishments, Squire Evans got his money's worth (£1500) for his money. I say that he did not.

Suppose Roland stripped of his wealth, what was he fit for? For my own part, I shall soon get near to believing that the Cornell "University" in the United States, or the Oxford, or still more, the Cambridge of Chaucer, is the best in the world. And now, when we have broken through tradition in every way, just conceive what we might make of our young men on the "Cornell" principle, with the Oxford and Cambridge revenues. But our purpose is to write a story, and this is past it. Let me come back to my proposition. Roland, after £1500 of expenditure, was little fit to cope with the world, as far as education had helped him.

In one moment, see what the Oxford and Cambridge of Chaucer were, not as bearing in any trifling opinions of mine, but in showing for the mere sake of five minutes' amusement, how each University has kept its character through so many centuries, at all events, in the public mind. What are the popular opinions about Cambridge now? The ideal Cambridge man is plodding, thrifty, quiet, diligent, solemn, wise. The ideal Oxford man is fantastic, noisy, extravagant, and given to practical jokes. Most of the "Joe Millers" for many years are laid at the door of "Oxford students." Just compare the ideal Oxford man of the day with the ideal Oxford man of Chaucer, as compared with his Cambridge man, and see how true it comes after so many centuries. Compare Allan and John, the Cambridge lads, who carried the wheat to Trumpington, with Hendy Nicholas and Soloman, the Oxford lads; and Allan also was a Scotchman: (we have had a senior wrangler or so from that kingdom of late years, I believe); and was there ever such an Oxford man as Soloman? His love for gaudry, his love for private theatricals, with an easy part and a fine dress. That inimitable Chaucer makes him act Herod. "Nothing to say and a fine dress—Tory Oxford all over," says a cynical Cambridge friend.

And of the others, what can be said? they were but little more prepared for the world than he. Had they been put to the test of competitive examination, they would have been found fit for nothing but ushers in schools, or curates. Clive, or Hastings, was not more ignorant, or more helpless, before he underwent that great competitive sink-or-swim examination, which is called The World.

CHAPTER XX.

As the time for the great wedding, which once again was to unite the rather often united houses of Evans and Maynard, drew near, some of those connected with the preparations noticed that there would be two rather conspicuous absentees. Young James Mordaunt had suddenly discovered that his whole heart was set on trying for the Engineers, and, failing that, getting into the Artillery; and in a

letter to his father, urged the necessity of going to Bonn to study at once.

The request was so very sudden and odd, that Squire Mordaunt wrote to his eldest son to consult him about the matter, and to beg him to see if Jem was in earnest. The result was, that the two brothers were closeted together, and the elder Mordaunt looked very grave and vexed when they parted. John Mordaunt wrote to his father very curtly, to say that he thought it would be much better if James was allowed to go to Bonn at Christmas instead of coming home. He could give no reasons, he said, but he had got his brother's leave to put the case before Roland Evans, and Roland Evans had agreed with him. Squire Mordaunt gave his consent wonderingly; and Eddy Evans noticed that from this time his brother Roland and John Mordaunt treated James Mordaunt with a rather solemn kindness and respect, which they had never exhibited before.

There was no sky-larking and folly now. Jem was the most solemn and miserable of the group. He got up a fiction that his health was bad, and that there was something the matter with his heart; poor boy! there *was*. Something past mending.

Eddy fell in popularity this autumn. Seeing every one (except Maynard) very low in their minds, he would play the fool to cheer them up; but no one wanted the fool played, and all the old babyish balderdash fell dead. For fun is a good enough thing in its way, and in its time, and is very like the flower called "*Gazanea*," or "*Dame d'onze heures*," a flower which, under the morning's cold, is no flower at all, but an ugly bud; but which, under the eleven o'clock sun, spreads out into a golden corona studded with pearls. Who knows it better than a story-teller? There has been fun of a sort in this story. How different it must look to a man without a care, and to a critic, reading the story in a perfunctory manner. I know a man who was highly complimented once, by probably the best judge of humour in England, on a passage in his novel. That identical passage was ticketed the very next week in one of the leading reviews, by the best critic we have, as pointless and degrading balderdash. What had pleased the one, had utterly disgusted the other, yet they were both fine judges. Thackeray, master of humour, says distinctly that what some think a mass of rather ugly stupidity, is the most amusing book ever written;* and, under any circumstances, jokes fall dead sometimes. It is no wonder that Eddy's babyish folly fell dead on the ears of men so deeply anxious as Roland Evans and the elder Mordaunt.

For a very ugly thing had happened. I have, I hope, not concealed from you the character of the younger Mordaunt. You remember the frightful bullying of poor little Eddy Evans by him, and have known that there was a wild beast vein in him somewhere. Say, if you like, that the Evanses and the Mordaunts had been crossed too often, and were beginning to show the true symptoms of the decadence of a family by a stupid, blind petulance in the males. Draw a parallel with racehorses, if you like. Blue Mantle or D'Estournel for instance. Account for it as you will, the fact remains the same. That splendid young man, Jemmy Mordaunt, tamed now for five years by fear of death and by gratitude to Roland, had broken out again. He had fallen in love, it seems, with Mildred Evans; and to Roland and to his brother John he talked of murder and suicide in the maddest manner.

To such steady-going stage-coaches as John Mordaunt and Roland Evans this was simply horrible. They, in their utter ignorance of physics, thought that this excitability of brain was permanent. It terrified

* Humphry Clinker.

them more than it need have done. How could they guess or know that the mad ferocity of the latest European cross of blood frequently went Berserk at the time of the most rapid physical development? Who was there to tell them that the Prussian duellist student, as soon as he moves his chair to his bureau, becomes the most quiet of men, a little haughty, perhaps, but a good fellow; or that that brown-faced gentleman who asks your opinion on a point in croquet, has been mad once and elbow-deep in Indian blood? Had they ever seen a private of Pelissier's Algerian division boiling beans and giving a baby bonbons? No. These lads knew nothing of these things. But poor Jemmy was pronounced mad, and was sent to Bonn.

Sir Jasper Meredith might have come, but his conduct was as crooked as his limbs. Mr. Evans asked him, and he wrote to Roland to refuse. He wrote, I am sorry to say, a very petulant and impertinent letter. "I shall not come," he said. "Now matters are come to a point, I am not sure that I am pleased. Your sister has had little or no choice in this matter. Who can be sure that she would have chosen Robert Mordaunt at all if she had had any one else to choose? I hate this kind of marriage beyond measure. Before either of them know their own minds, they bind themselves to live for at least fifty years together, barring accidents. It is not at all a wise arrangement, and I am going to stay with Jemmy at Bonn."

Roland showed this letter, in a state of white fury, to John Mordaunt. "The ill-tempered little fellow," he said, "to write me such a letter as that: I have it in my heart to beat him."

"He is a cranky little chap," said Ox Mordaunt. "And it is no business of his, which makes his letter a piece of cool impertinence which you ought certainly to resent. But I don't know. No man in this world ever speaks decidedly, unless there is some grain of truth in what he says. I ain't positive of many things, but I am positive of that. Why, the very telegrams themselves begin, 'it is asserted,' or something of that sort, to let you down easy. Meredith is positive in this matter as far as he dare be. I doubt he knows something."

"Do you mean to say that you agree with Meredith?" asked Roland.

"No," said Mordaunt, "not exactly. But I wish the engagement had been a longer one: that is all. When little Meredith says that they don't know their own minds, I agree with him. It is a boy-and-girl match, and may turn out well or ill. It is all a toss up."

"The women of our family always make good wives," said Roland.

"Your *family!*" said old Mordaunt. "You are like ourselves, crossed with half the blood in Shropshire, and, like ourselves, you have produced no great sire who could leave his mark in the family, like the horse Tadmor, for generations. You Evanses, certainly, don't breed true. Look at Eddy. He is no more your brother than I am. And the bride, she is not your sister, she is Eddy's. Don't talk to me about your family. Is your family capable of fierce rabid vindictiveness."

"Certainly not," said Roland. "Look at our history."

"You haven't got any history," said old Mordaunt. "You have never produced a distinguished man, before yourself. So your family is incapable of vindictive ferocity? Why, man, that vagabond poor brother of mine, Jem, used to leather and pound Eddy, and I have thrashed him for it; and whilst I have been thrashing my brother, I have been glad that your little kitten of a brother had not had a knife in his hand when my brother was bullying him. And Mildred is his sister, not yours."

"You put matters rather coarsely, old fellow," said Roland,

"I am a brute I doubt. Where

you got your refinement from, in the atmosphere of this valley, I can't think. It is suffocating me. To wind up all in a downright manner, I hope everything will go right. Bob Maynard is a good fellow, not without brains; but upon my soul I wish they both had more time to look about them. In the name of heaven, what is there to prevent him, when he gets into the world, finding a woman he likes better than your sister? That would be death to her."

"Then love will last unto death," said Roland.

"How do you know that? Who told you that? You have had a fancy for more than one woman, have you not?"

"Certainly not," said Roland, promptly; "I never had a fancy for any woman in my life. By-the-by, do you mean little Mary Maynard. Well, I like her about as well as I do your brother Jem."

There was something contemptuous in old Mordaunt's voice, when he growled out, "Then you are more lucky than most men. For my own part, I am not made of the same stuff that you are. I can sum up three girls that I would have gone to the devil for in the last three years. But I have changed, and hurt no one. Suppose Bob Maynard was to change."

"He can't change after he is married," said Roland.

"No, you are right there," said old Mordaunt, "that is just the very thing he can't do."

"Well, don't go on," said Roland; and so old Mordaunt left off.

It was strange to Roland that this very wedding, a splendid affair altogether—a marriage which united two considerable estates, and which brought youth, beauty, and wealth together in such a singular manner—was objected to by the very people he thought would approve of it most. The vague bucolic elder Mordaunt had scarcely finished his illogical lowings over it, and had not yet reached his father's house across the valley, in the dark, nay, even had walked into the trout-stream, and was still swearing, when Aunt Eleanor came into the room where Roland was sitting, and told him, as a piece of good news, that Mildred was quite quiet now.

"What the devil has the girl got to be unquiet about?"

"*I* don't know," said Aunt Eleanor, who, in spite of her farming and shooting, was as thorough a woman as ever walked. That is to say, when anything happened she would accuse the nearest man of it on the spot, and leave him to get out of the scrape the best way he could. "I don't know what she has to be unquiet about, but she is perfectly quiet now, and seems inclined to sleep."

"Have you been worrying her in any way? I doubt you have."

"I haven't said a word to her. What do you mean?"

"I'd *sleep* her," said the exasperated Roland. "Why, she is going to marry the man of her own choice tomorrow. She must be a perfect idiot."

"We are all idiots, we women," said Aunt Eleanor. "We know it, my dear. That is the worst of it. Mildred is an idiot. But she has been in a state of strong nervous excitement all the day, and is comparatively quiet now."

"But you did not make such a fool of yourself when you were married, Aunt."

"My dear, I never was married," said Aunt Eleanor, quietly; "your memory is going with study, my dear."

This so took the wind out of Roland's sails that he had to start on a fresh tack.

"Aunt Eleanor, I beg your pardon. But I want to ask you something; would you postpone this marriage if you could? Old Mordaunt has been gandering here, and has just gone home in the dark, swearing. Now,

would you postpone this marriage if you could?"

"Yes," said Aunt Eleanor. "Good night."

And so she went to bed. And Roland, who, in his unapproachable purism, is about as good a hero as a bean-stalk or a punt-pole, sat before the fire and wondered why the deuce people couldn't marry one another without all this botheration.

The elder Mordaunt, having fallen into the trout-stream and done his share of swearing in getting out of it, blundered on to his father's house, and, getting over the hedge, saw that the party which his father had had to dinner, and which party he had avoided, had not yet dispersed. He therefore went in through the servants' hall.

It was full of all kinds of people, coachmen, footmen, and grooms; and he was wet through. He had thought that he might have got warm there, and possibly supper, served by his own servants; but the strange faces made him pass on, and he went up to bed sulky and silent.

It would have done him no harm to have heard the comments which were made on him by the domestic servants (as far as I know them, a kind, gentle, and affectionate set of people) when he was gone. They had nothing to say of him but what was good. For the elder Mordaunt was universally respected and liked. He went upstairs, however, and hurried into bed in the dark.

He had not slept long before he was awakened; there was a light in the room, and looking up he saw that his sister was standing beside his bed.

It is very rare indeed to see great and very youthful beauty dressed in such textures as are usually reserved for married women. Ethel Mordaunt dressed so; it was part of her imitation of Miss Evans. She was dressed in very dark maroon-coloured velvet, with bare neck and arms, and not one single jewel, save one dull amethyst, on her bosom. The effect of the splendidly moulded arms and bust, with the freshness and brilliant colour of extreme youth upon them—a freshness and colour which soon goes, like the bloom upon a grape—was startling and dazzling beyond measure, in contrast to the dark velvet. The sight of a blooming girl, beautiful beyond most, but dressed in velvet, is so rare, that my readers may find it hard to realize, and it would certainly be a very expensive whim to do so; it would cost twenty pounds; yet you may do it, as far as colour is concerned, for nothing. Get a bud (mind, a bud) of that inimitable rose called "Jaune D'Espray," and wrap it, say, in a leaf of the variegated arrowroot, and you will gain an idea of the effect of young flesh against velvet; but see that there is no dew-drop upon it, for that would represent a jewel, and, with its coarse, mathematical, humdrum prismatics, would catch your eye, and spoil the picture.

Old Mordaunt, in any other case, would have seen all this, perhaps; but then, it was only his sister; he asked her what the deuce she wanted, and whether a fellow was to be bully-ragged out of his very bed.

"Don't be cross, dear," said Ethel, sitting down on the bed.

Old Mordaunt said, "If you will hook it, and leave me to sleep, I won't be cross; if you sit there, I will. Go to bed, will you. Why the deuce can't you go to bed? You wouldn't like it if I were to hunt you up in the middle of the night, and break *your* rest. I should hear of that at breakfast, I dare say. Just you hook it, my lady. Come."

"I want to talk to you, John."

"I know you do. And I know what you want to talk about. And I know how you will wrap it up, and bring it out piece by piece. And I know your obstinacy (you call it determination—*I* don't). And I know

that you'll sit there till the morning until it's done, as girls all do it, by piecemeal insinuations. There! I'll do it all for you, like Dickens' brick-maker did for the district visitor. How is Mildred? Mildred is making a fool of herself, in every possible way. This match is of her choosing, and she now is making a silly fuss as if she was averse to it. How does Bob Maynard take it? He knows nothing of it. If he did, the assembled women would steadily and stoutly lie the whole thing away from him, and she would be the loudest. What is Roland doing? he is doing nothing; yet every thing but the one thing I wish he would do. What is Eddy doing? he is giggling. What is Aunt Eleanor doing? jawing and scuffling, and trying to make noise enough to make people believe there is nothing wrong. What are you doing? keeping me awake, and so just you hook it, or I'll make you."

"Don't be cross, Johnny."

"You said that before, and if any thing exasperates a man more than another, it is being told not to lose his temper. That is a thorough example of female tact, or woman's wisdom; go to bed."

"I will go," said the good Ethel; "but I'll say something before I go, which will prevent you from sleeping this night, my dear old man."

John Mordaunt sat up in his bed at once. He saw that she was in earnest. "If you have really anything to tell me, my old, good sister, I will lie awake all night. You are not angry with me?"

"Do you remember any one who was ever angry with you, Johnny?" she said, drawing nearer to him.

"No one except the doctor at school," said John Mordaunt. "Speak up, old girl."

"I will. Johnny, do you know this, that women are bad hands at keeping secrets?"

"Mary Howitt's story of the Snail and the Bagman taught me that, when I was eight years old," said John.

"Very like," said Ethel. "But I can tell you that a woman can keep her own secret through fire and water, to the rack, to the stake. But a woman cannot always undertake the miserable burden of another's secret."

"Have you a secret of your own then, sister?"

"Aye, and mean to keep it too, my brother. But I have another secret; the secret about Mildred and Jem. And you must know, brother, I trust you beyond all men. Brother, there is nobody like you."

"And I was cross to you because you woke me!" said John, taking her hand. "Sister, let me tell you at once; this secret is known to us; I mean to Roland and myself. Jem has gone to Bonn, and will get over it. It was all madness. She knows nothing of it. All madness."

"You are the madman, dear brother, if you think so. What do you know of this most miserable business. Trust me, and tell me categorically."

"I'll tell you all that Roland and I know," he said, very quietly. "Jem was always difficult you know, and hard to deal with. You know of his brutality to Eddy at school, and of his being picked out of the water, nearly dead, by Roland and Eddy. After that, his life seemed to change, for he is a queer boy, Ethel; you cannot always calculate on him; and he devoted himself to these Evanses in his wild way. They could do anything they liked with him. And in the end of the last long vacation, Bob Maynard took things rather too comfortably with Mildred Evans, and left her too much with James. And Jem fell in love with her. He was in love with her brothers before. And Jem—our poor, good Jem—who *is* a trump, old girl, is sent to Bonn. And it is all over, and she never will know anything about it. That is all."

"*Is* it?" said Ethel, by this time as

pale as a ghost. "Then, brother, you don't know anything about his having spoken to her. You don't—"

It was John Mordaunt's turn to turn pale now. "Leave the room for a minute, Ethel," he said. "I must get up over this."

She was scarcely outside the door, when he called her in; he was sitting half dressed in a chair. "Finish this, old girl," he said. "Let's have it out. So Jem, poor old Jem, he spoke to her, did he. And she cut him up with scorn, and sent him right about to the deuce?"

"Why, no, she didn't," said Ethel.

"Think what you are saying, old girl; just think what you are saying."

"Good heavens! Johnny, do you think that I haven't thought. I tell you that she has changed her mind. I tell you that she would go to the world's end for Jem."

"How do you know?"

"From both of them. Jem told me first, before you all went to that weary, silly Oxford. And she told me the day before yesterday. And if it matured, I am to be her bridesmaid to-morrow."

John Mordaunt began walking quickly up and down the room. The first thing he said was, "Why, Ethel, there never was but one soul between us five, since we grew up, till now. Why, from Eddy with the rudder lines, to Jemmy in the bow, there was but one soul among us. And to see the old four-oar burst up like this! I am not a sentimental man, but I don't feel as if I could stand it. I'd cry, if I knew how, but I never did."

"The question is," said Ethel, "what can we do?"

"In what way?" said John, stopping in his walk.

"Generally," said Ethel.

"There she goes," said John, "that is her woman's wisdom all over. What do you mean?"

"I mean," said Ethel, "what can we do?"

"Pish!" said John Mordaunt; "do you want to stop the marriage, or don't you? Speak out and give your opinion. What is it?"

"That is just exactly what I don't know myself," said Ethel; "I trusted to your well-known sound commonsense to tell me what to do."

"And I'll be hanged if I know," said John Mordaunt.

"Could we prevent it if we tried?" said Ethel.

"I don't think we could," said John.

"Then suppose Jemmy was to stay at Bonn, and we were to keep our own counsel?"

"It might be better," said John.

"It could hardly be mended," said Ethel. "On my honour, she is very fond of Robert Maynard, and if you will stay away, and Robert will be kind to her,—and when was he not kind?—she will forget Jem, as I might in long ages forget Roland, if he was kept away from me. Keep them apart, and they may forget one another."

"It is possible," said John Mordaunt, "the thing has gone too far. They are to be married to-morrow, and if we try to stop it, we have not a leg to stand on. Let it be. Trust to God, and let us keep our own secrets. Now go to bed."

She left him. She little dreamed, in the heat of her speech, that she had betrayed her own secret to her elder brother. She did not remember her words, but he did. He knew now, as Miss Evans had known before, that her whole heart was given to Roland.

If John Mordaunt was one thing more than another, he was a gentleman. I have seen gentlemen with various degrees of education, and in various dresses. Sometimes in a blue coat and brass buttons, as a county magistrate. (Did *you*, my dear reader, ever see a country gentleman in a blue coat and brass buttons? I never saw but one, and he has been

dead these ten years—it is only the literary way of putting it.) I have seen gentlemen in all kinds of disguises. Among the first rank of the gentlemen whom I knew, I should be inclined to rank a duke's son who is a sailor; a dissenting farmer; a slightly High Church curate; and a nondescript sort of ballaster on the Thames. If I ever betted, I would give long odds that none of these four would do a dishonest action, or would say one word, unless speaking to a principle, which would wound any one else. I suppose that such a person is a gentleman.

One *specialite* of a gentleman is not to betray secrets. John Mordaunt kept his sister's secret, with regard to Roland, tight between his teeth. She had forgotten that she had betrayed it, and he never reminded her. It was a dead secret.

A dead secret between those two, sacredly kept. It was no secret between poor wild James and her; but she would have been horrified if she had thought that her elder brother knew of it. He was a man, and might—might—what? Form an opinion on it, and make some sort of movement. Aunt Eleanor had found it out, and she was as the idols of Abou Simbel. She had told it to the bird, her dog, and her brother Jem, and one was as likely to betray her as the other; for poor Jem had a dumb, brutish fidelity about him, which the fear of death could not make him violate; and Jem had once, in one of his childish skirmishes, cut a curl from Roland's head. And where was that curl now, I wonder?"

That objectionable woman, Myrtle, used to do the dressmaking in old times, but she was in London, staying with Mrs. Gray, and she was succeeded by a tipsy old trot called Booth, who had been kept hard at work in the housekeeper's room under Myrtle, in the old times, but who now was allowed to take her work home, in consequence of having had an apoplectic seizure or two on the premises, and the doctor having warned Squire Mordaunt of the extreme inconvenience of an inquest on the premises, which he, as coroner, was capable to speak of. This old lady had got some of Ethel's fal-lals still in hand, things necessary for the wedding to-morrow; and Ethel knew she would come, sooner or later, being a resolute and trustworthy woman when in liquor, though not much good at other times (which were few); and so she sat waiting for her, until all but a few servants were gone to bed. Trying to think that it would all be for the best, and not making very good weather of it.

The dogs which are necessary to a country gentleman's existence heralded Mrs. Booth's approach. She was one of those women that dogs could not bear, and so all those which were loose skirmished about her heels, and those which were chained up howled in anguish, because they could not get at her. Not a dog touched her; they might howl, and yell, and bark, but not a dog came very close to that woman. Well, one, but he was like the Urquhart-Rabelais breed, junior and inexperienced. A black-and-tan terrier puppy, not much bigger than your fist, aroused from his slumbers by the noise, hurled himself at her, as if it was Balaclava, and he was the Six Hundred. She sent him by a dexterous kick in among the others, who fell upon him and hunted him back to his mother. After which, she was shown up, very flushed, to Ethel's presence.

"You are very late, Mrs. Booth."

"Yes, Miss. I stayed to supper with Mrs. Gray and Mrs. Myrtle."

"Why, Mrs. Myrtle is in London."

"Saving your presence, miss, *was*. Mrs. Myrtle has come down for the wedding, and Mrs. Gray has come with her.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE wedding-day rose frosty and bright. There had been a little sheet of snow in the night, which had laid a shawl of lace over the dark, purple velvet of Longmynd, made the clear summit of Caradoc shine like a silver crystal, and, apparently, had affected Aunt Eleanor's temper.

I would not invade the sanctity of a maiden lady's bedroom further than by saying that if Aunt Eleanor's bed did not stand against the wall, she certainly had got out of it the wrong side. For the first thing she said to her own face in the looking-glass was, "A parcel of fools!"

Then she set to work ringing her bell, which at first produced no result whatever. This pleased her immensely; for when you are in an ill-temper nothing is so delightful as to find an excuse for it. While she was ringing, her maids were engaging in a lively and acrimonious debate as to whose duty it was to get up at this exceptionally early hour of the morning. Aunt Eleanor's personal attendant declined on the grounds of precedent —her lady had never rung her up so early before; the ringing, she argued, was for the housemaids to get up and make the house tidy in decent time, instead of lying routing there. The housemaid declined to take this view of the matter, but made a coalition with the body-servant on the subject of cook, who was at once bawled awake and told that Missis wanted her at once. Cook, looking out from among the sheets, listened to the case of the allied powers, told them briefly that that sort of thing wouldn't do with *her*, and at once went fast asleep again with a rapidity and dexterity acquired by long practice—acquired in many hot kitchens; leaving the allied powers paralyzed, and, for the time, silent.

But there was a little scrubbing-maid from the workhouse (consequently petted by Aunt Eleanor before all people in the house) who lay in a bed in the corner, sleeping harder than even cook, who appeared to the allied powers available. Here another hitch occurred: there was a general debate as to who should get out of bed and wake her. The powers all round having declined *seriatim* to move in this matter without an alliance, offensive and defensive, being signed all round, the weakest power, the lady's maid, whose case was not so good as the others, proposed that she should be "pelted up." Which, with some modifications, was done. Prussia and Austria threw shoes and other things at her until she woke, and then England and France told her there was nothing to be afraid of, so, at the last, poor little Denmark put on her petticoat, and went to face

the terrible Aunt Eleanor single-handed.

Aunt Eleanor ordered little Denmark to bed again, in the most emphatic manner, daring her to get up for the next two hours, after which, in her camisole, she went up to the maids' bedroom.

Here I draw the veil. They say that cook slept through it all, and snored the while; but we know what rumour is. Any one can snore. It is pretty certain, however, that more housewifery went on in Pulverbatch Grange in the next hour than had gone on in any previous hour. Squire Mordaunt used to say that Eleanor's maids would knock out the walls of the Grange with the points of their scrubbing-brushes. It escaped this ordeal, however, and so will probably continue to shelter the head of the solitary grey-haired old woman who sits there now, until she is carried to Stretton churchyard with the others.

With breakfast came three most unexpected visitors. Eddy, with John and Ethel Mordaunt. She was astonished, and she said, "Why, what do you three want here?"

Old John Mordaunt answered; for Eddy, who was to have spoken, hung fire.

"Why, we like you better than anybody else, Miss Evans, and we thought that you would like to see us this morning. So we walked across to breakfast."

Aunt Eleanor was perfectly silent for an instant. Her face was perfectly quiet, but Ethel, who saw everything, saw her fine bust heave once or twice. All she said was, "This is very kind of you, my dears—come in."

They went in; and Aunt Eleanor began bustling about among her lazy maids to get them something for breakfast. They said, all three, that they did not want anything particular for them. Ethel put in as a *riding* remark, that there would be plenty of breakfast presently, and that it would be a pity to spoil their appetites. On this theme Eddy enlarged, as it seemed to have struck him as a new idea, and he looked at Ethel with great admiration.

He, an authority in matters of eating and drinking, gave it as his opinion that it would be a pity to have much now.

"Lord bless me!" said Aunt Eleanor. "Do let me pass some of the trouble off in my own way. It is not every day that one gets into such a stupid botheration as this. Be quiet, Eddy."

"You consider this matter as a botheration then, Miss Evans?" said old Mordaunt."

"Of course I do. What do *you* think of it then?" said Aunt Eleanor.

"A most happy match, surely. There is wealth, beauty, and affection."

"That means that they are both good-looking, have enough to live on, and like one another, young Mordaunt," said Aunt Eleanor. "You and I are both good-looking, we are richer than they are, and unless I am deceived, are very fond of one another; and a pretty pair *we* should make. Fiddle-de-dee!"

There was nothing to do but to laugh. "I don't say that they won't be as happy as any other two fools who marry when they can help it. What aggravates me is that they *could* help it. How any woman who could exist without being married can ever go and get married, I can't think. Look at me."

They did so—and an uncommonly handsome lady she was. But it was rather confusing that she did not go on with her argument, but conceived that a mere contemplation of her person finished it. Eddy had to take up the conversation, and a nice mess he made of it—as usual.

"But you could have been married if you liked, aunt." Which was just

putting the argument upside down. "I am sure you could."

"Fifty times," said Aunt Eleanor. Which, by the way, was not true.

"Then why didn't you?" said Eddy, to the confusion of counsel. "It would have been much better for you. Your husband might have drunk, or made away with your money; and then you would have had some of those trials in life which you are always recommending to me. It might have purified and elevated your character, you know, I am only quoting your own words."

Aunt Eleanor took no notice of Eddy's nonsense; she never did. Towards the world, Miss Evans was shrewd and caustic; towards that pretty, kindly youth, she was, as folks said, a fool. Whatever he did was right. She had given her heart to him, and he repaid her with its blood. She passed him over now, and went on with her argument, looking straight at Ethel.

"That sister of yours, John Mordaunt, she will be wanting to get married some of these days."

"There is nobody good enough for Ethel," said John Mordaunt.

"*Ex-actly*," said Aunt Eleanor; "but you mark my words, she will want to go marrying somebody. And nobody is good enough for her."

"I think that 'nobody' is," said old Mordaunt.

"Yes, but 'nobody' don't see it. And Nobody is a foolish prig, and he won't do half as well in the world as he thinks. And so pretty, old Ethel, come and get ready, for it is quite time. If nobody is a donkey, somebody is a goose, as somebody else was before her. Eddy, go and see after the carriage;" and Eddy went.

"There goes the best of you all," said Aunt Eleanor. "There is no one like him. Don't tell me."

"I am not going to tell you, Miss Evans," said old Mordaunt. "I quite agree with you. There is no one like Eddy. He is the only perfectly unselfish person I ever saw."

"I'll not have him go to India," said Aunt Eleanor. "I'll make him exchange, if his regiment is ordered there." Whereby Ethel and John gathered, that Miss Evans destined Eddy for the military service.

"Well, my dears," said Aunt Eleanor, "perhaps we had better start to see these two married, if we mean to go at all. Where is Roland?"

He had gone over to Maynard's Barton, it seemed, to fetch the bridegroom, whereat Aunt Eleanor said, "Humph."

They drove gaily away, in Aunt Eleanor's carriage, along the frosty roads; and it was really impossible to resist the weather, and they got cheerful. Eddy said that he wished they had a flag; that it was a great mistake not having a flag; Aunt Eleanor looked so fine that she wanted a flag to set her off. And, indeed, that lady was remarkably fine indeed, and showed the more splendid because the others had not got on their wedding-dresses: priceless grey silk and priceless white lace composed her dress. She looked uncommonly like the landscape. Her beauty was perfectly unimpaired; and looking at her, that strange, stolid young man, John Mordaunt, said, with perfect respect and perfect coolness, that the bride would not be the handsomest woman there that day.

"Do you mean Ethel, or me?" said Aunt Eleanor.

"You," said John Mordaunt.

Aunt Eleanor was immensely gratified. "I believe I *am* very handsome," she said. "*I* think so, and I am a tolerable judge, I believe. You may say that again, young man, if you choose. You are a young man of discretion and discernment, and say what you mean. It is a pity that I am old enough to be your mother, or you and I might have made a match of it, and I would

have licked you into shape, and made a gentlemen of you; as it is, you must stay as you are. I suppose you will want to marry some day, and I will give you your wedding present. If the young lady to whom you give your attentions ever tells you that she don't like having her beauty admired, break off the match instantly, for she is a humbug."

Johnny Mordaunt laughed, silently, between his big shoulders, and said that Ethel was the girl for him—a sentiment of which Aunt Eleanor approved most highly.

The four very quaint people were very late. The bride and bridegroom were there, Mrs. Evans and Mrs. Maynard were there, Roland was there, in puce-coloured pantaloons, looking noble, and talking to Mary Maynard the bridesmaid, in a way which looked very like an immediate repetition of this insane folly, said Aunt Eleanor to herself; every one was there, except Squire Charles Evans. The younger party had to tear upstairs to dress themselves, and while they were doing so, Aunt Eleanor sailed about and made herself agreeable, more particularly to Mrs. Maynard, a woman she utterly detested.

"You must be a happy woman, Mrs. Maynard," she said, "to see your son so well married." Mrs. Maynard wept: it is the *rôle* on such occasions.

"What is the woman crying about?" *thought* Aunt Eleanor. "She ought to be in a state of frantic hilarity, and no doubt is." And then went on aloud, "I wouldn't cry if I was in your place, Mrs. Maynard. It is all stuff and nonsense and fiddle-de-dee, crying, you know. I certainly should cry if my boy, Eddy, was going to be married, because I should lose the sweetest companion I ever had in my life. But you and your son have never been on the best of terms, in spite of his very sweet and gentle nature, and so I should have thought that you would be glad, at all events, that all matters of dispute were ended between you by his marriage."

Mrs. Maynard said that Aunt Eleanor did not know what a mother's feelings were: a remark which would have silenced most maiden ladies, in whom the Jewish superstition is ingrained with their first education. It had no effect on Aunt Eleanor.

"Not know a mother's feelings! I should rather think I did, if anybody did. Why, you never cared half as much for that boy of yours as I do for Eddy. *He* never was the delight of your eyes and your heart, as Eddy is to me. Bah! you and your mother's feelings, indeed!"

I solemnly aver that Aunt Eleanor, against her will, began this conversation with the sole and entire view of being agreeable to Mrs. Maynard; and she finished in this way. I don't defend her in the least. I never knew any one who could be more agreeable than she could, or a more finished lady, when she chose to be. But the greatest fault in her character was that when she despised anybody heartily, she could not help showing it. She tried, but she could not. Some may say that this did her honour. I think not; but will not argue, further than saying, that if all people were like Aunt Eleanor, society would become impossible. You can't *live* on quinine.

Moving from her, with a view of getting civil again, she encountered Squire Mordaunt, who said, "Hallo, Eleanor! what have you been saying to the Crocodile?"

"More than I meant."

"You always do," said Squire Mordaunt, testily. "Hang it all, Eleanor, why *can't* you be civil?"

"Well, don't begin, George. Where is Charles?"

"Charles is ill. I don't think he will show," said Squire Mordaunt.

"Not very ill?" said Aunt Eleanor.

"Oh, no. Now, come, old girl,—go back to that woman, Maynard, and be civil to her." And Aunt Eleanor went at once. Perhaps you may have remarked that there are some men, by no means strong or clever, to whom the most independent women will listen at once. Squire Mordaunt was one of them.

But we must hold their conversation over till after the pageant, for there was no time for it before. Ethel, dressed for second bridesmaid, sailed into the room, dressed in full panoply, bouquet in hand, with her head in the air, looking so imperially beautiful that Mrs. Maynard went into raptures about her to Aunt Eleanor, and sailing straight up to little Mary Maynard, who was undergoing a strong flirtation from Roland, touched her on the shoulder, and said—

"Now, Mary, if we are to be married to-day, we must take away our bride. Roland, if you are going to make another match with Mary, say so, because if you are not, you had better see after your man." For, you see, the school of Aunt Eleanor had had some effect on Miss Ethel; and I am far from saying that as things are, Aunt Eleanor's school is a good one for a young lady. We must take things as we find them.

However, they went to church and got married, and the bride seemed very happy and proud, and the bride and bridegroom came back in the same carriage; and all was rejoicing at Stretton, save the little fact that master was too ill to join in the festivities, but lay in bed. It did not much matter to any of them. "Pa is ill," said Eddy. Roland, who went and sat with his father, did not look grave. The doctor came down to breakfast, and was very merry; telling the company that Squire Charles' ailment was nothing. But the concentrated eyes of Aunt Eleanor and Ethel caught those of John Mordaunt the younger, across the piled table. And when his eyes answered theirs, he shook his head. And Ethel and Eleanor knew that Asrael was coming from the bridal chamber. But although these two could talk too much at times, they could hold their tongues like another.

* * *

Who are here, in the name of goodness, under the leafless poplars watching the crashing, hissing ice?

A mass of wasted bones, calling itself a man—calling itself Sir Jasper Meredith. A splendid, rather cruel-looking young man, with a fiercely-erected head, like that of an adder, who called himself James Mordaunt. They sat together, this winter afternoon, looking out of the convent window, at Rolandseck, of all places in Europe.

"We can't go back to-night, Jimmy," said Sir Jasper Meredith.

"No, the boatmen would not take us," said poor, wild Jim; "it is all over by now, I suppose."

"Yes, it has been over this two hours," said Sir Jasper. "She is married by now. Why don't you groan, why don't you fling yourself into the river among that ice—eh?"

"I don't come of a groaning family," said the younger Mordaunt. "Besides, she is Roley's sister, and Bob Maynard is a good fellow, and she is better with him than with me, Jasper. I am only a brute."

"You are a very gentle one then—*I* never had a more gentle friend, even in Roland."

"Yes. I have been tamed by Roland and Eddy, and by you, my old brick. But the brute is in me still. By ——, old man, when I think of what is happening to-day" (I can go no further—the young man was mad—) "and she not loving him—I could commit crime. I could, by the Lord Harry. But he is a good fellow, never a better. All I say is, I see my way to crime."

"I have committed it, Jimmy," said Sir Jasper Meredith, coolly. "Move me, will you?—my hip seems going right through the sofa on to the floor. *I* have committed crime."

"As how, then. What crime?"

"Swindling or conspiracy, I think. Do you ever think of any body else besides yourself, by any chance? Do you ever think of Roland?"

"I only love his sister through him."

"Would you like to see him married to Mary Maynard?"

"That miserable little fool! How dare she! Jasper, my whole heart was set on his marrying my sister, and on my marrying his. There are mysteries which you, in your refined nature, do not see, but which I, more brutal possibly than you, can see. For Roland, I want my sister Ethel. For myself, I wanted Mildred. Then the accord of our two lives would have been perfect. People think, Dr. K—— thinks, Aunt Eleanor thinks, that my love is for Eddy. It is not so; it is for Roland. I would have married his sister, but that is over; over this very day. At least, he may marry mine."

"Perhaps he will," said Sir Jasper.

"No chance," said Poor Jim. "He is taken with Mary Maynard, *his* brother you know. Ethel is the only woman fit for him. Shall I tell you a secret, Jasper?"

"Yes," said Sir Jasper, "provided it is not that your sister Ethel is in love with him, and that he don't care twopence for her."

"But that *was* the secret."

"Sweet innocent, as if we did not know it! How about Mary Maynard? Roland was inclined to make a fool of himself in that quarter, but I have violated the laws of my country and bowled him out. Ethel shall have a fair chance."

"What have you done?"

"A most rascally thing. Mrs. Maynard wanted me sadly, as I once told your brother and Ethel, at lunch, at Maynard's Barton. The old woman of Maynard's Barton has been trying to get me for a son-in-law. Now, I have not responded. The girl is a fool, and the mother another. I have tried to save Rowland from many things—for instance, from that wretched boat-racing; but I never worked so hard as I have now to save him from this miserable match with this fool of a girl. I have tried mother and daughter, and have found them both willing, either for me or for him. And now I have sent a letter to the mother, most incautiously worded, which will make her tell Roland that his chance is over there."

"Have you proposed for the girl?" said Jemmy.

"No. Only bowled Roland out. I could not stand by and see him marry such a fool as that. I want your sister to have a chance. If the old woman is down upon me—well, the old woman will be down upon me. But unless Roland makes a very great fool of himself, he has little chance at Maynard's Barton. Will you carry me to bed? and if you will take the advice of a heap of bones—go yourself."

Jimmy carried Sir Jasper to bed; but he did not follow the advice of that funny little baronet, to go to bed himself. On the contrary, he stood in the door-way of Nonnenwerth till a late hour, listening to the cold, cruel ice, as it hissed and crashed down the Rhine, looking up from time to time at the empty bare, arch of Rolandseck, above and beyond it. At Rolandseck, of all places in Europe.

Now we must return to the marriage-feast. Every privileged man, according to the old country custom, saluted the bride; and then, by a still older custom, the groomsmen saluted the bridesmaids. Roland, holding out his gloved hand, took Ethel's gloved hand, and calmly and coldly saluted her on the cheek. She was as calm

and as cold as he was, until he, still holding her hand, said, "God bless you, dearest Ethel; you will do the same for my bride as you have done for my sister." And Ethel, gallant girl as she was, bravely patted his hand, and said, "Indeed, dear Roland, I will. May I congratulate you?" And he said, "I think so." Then he kissed Mary Maynard, who made a fuss; and the kissing being all done, they went home, and fell to eating and drinking.

Ethel told Aunt Eleanor what Roland had said, and Aunt Eleanor at once, as Ethel expressed it, retired on her temper. "My temper," she used to tell Ethel, "is by far the most valuable of all my possessions. I make 50 per cent. by my farm; but then I make 200 per cent. by the credit of having a temper, which, as you know, my dear, is not a very bad one." And, indeed, the good lady was right. She always got her own way in everything; not because she had the credit of having a *bad* temper, but an *uncertain* one. You never knew exactly what form her temper would take. There were three moods to it. Firstly, she would occasionally break out and scold, in which mood her caustic, well-trained tongue would carry all before it; secondly, if it suited her, she would remain stony dumb—a phase which generally exasperated every one, except Squire Mordaunt and Ethel, into fury and subsequent submission; thirdly, and lastly: she had a phase of temper which beat every one but young John Mordaunt (nothing ever beat him). "I don't mind Miss Evans's temper one *bit*," said Ethel, once to her father and mother, "*till she gets polite.* Then I can't stand it." Miss Evans was not polite on this occasion. She had fallen back on the mood of stony dumbness, and she watched Mrs. Maynard, Mary, and Roland.

Being allowed, however, by those accustomed to know her, to be out of temper, she got her own way, and disarranged the whole table until she had got Ethel on one side of her, and young John Mordaunt on the other; with a view, as she explained to them, vaguely, of keeping her eye on the crocodiles. Ethel and John supplied her with vivers, which she took like a calm woman of the world, but still maintaining a stony silence, until John, having given her something she liked, she said, "You are very good to me, my dear."

John said, "Pray don't, Miss Evans."

"Don't what?" she said, sharply.

"Don't be polite to us. We haven't done anything."

"My dears, I was not thinking of being polite to you two. I'd be polite to that woman, if the table did not divide us," she continued, rubbing her nose with a spoon, thoughtfully. "I can't make that woman out a bit."

"Send Eddy round to ask her what she is up to," said John Mordaunt.

"Just exactly the very thing I was thinking of myself. I have a good mind to send Eddy round to her with my message, and stop his allowance till he comes back with her answer."

"What would the message be, Miss Evans—how would it run?" asked young John Mordaunt, laughing, frankly, in her face.

"Something like this," she said, beginning on her jelly. "You old trot; you most scheming Cleopatra, inundation old crocodile, listen to me. What do you mean by puzzling *me.* I can't make you out. What are you at? What do you mean? You have been angling and fishing for him, and you have caught him. Therefore, my fine madam, what makes you look as black as thunder, and what is the reason that your idiotic little daughter will scarcely speak to him, and evidently wants to go to her room, and cry her eyes out? Explain this, crocodile, and send back the explanation by Eddy, or I'll come round for it myself."

"I don't think she would like *that*," said John Mordaunt.

"I don't think she *would*," said Aunt Eleanor.

"Let us watch them," said John Mordaunt. "*I* can't make her out."

Ethel had not heard one word of the latter part of the conversation. She was talking to a young squire, on the other side of her, whom she liked, but whom she had to bully out of the folly of making love to her. Aunt Eleanor and young John Mordaunt ate and watched for a little time, but saw only what Aunt Eleanor had rather vividly described—Roland undoubtedly making love, and both mother and daughter repelling it.

Young John Mordaunt, after a time, became aware that one of the faces on his right was so far thrust forward as to engage his attention; looking that way, he saw that it was his father's. He at once drew back, and pulled Aunt Eleanor's sleeve, "The governor is looking at us," he said, and by watching Aunt Eleanor, he learnt a lesson in *carriage*.

With her cold, calm eyelids sunk upon her eyes, she bent a little forward, and by a slight turn of her head, which no one could notice unless he had been watching her intensely, let Squire Mordaunt know that she understood him. Nothing more was necessary. The ladies, shortly afterwards, left the table, and some one made a speech. Eddy came and sat by John Mordaunt, and wondered why he was so thoughtful. John Mordaunt was revolving these things: Had his governor ever been in love with Aunt Eleanor? If not, how did they understand one another so well. If he had ever been in love with her, why the dickens didn't he marry her? And, if he had; what effect would it have had on his, John Mordaunt's, prospects? Which last thing was a matter too big for him.

Roland was gone, and he thought he would go after him; why, he scarcely knew. Eddy was busy taking the best flowers from the vases, poor little man, and tying them up into tiny bouquets. "One for each of the girls," he said; "they would be withered by to-morrow if they were left; and each of them is a drop of blood out of Macdingaway's heart." John Mordaunt, a ruminative animal, left the assembled squires and parsons over their wine and their arguments, and went out towards the conservatory. He will tell you to this day, that the last thing he ever heard of the old time was his dear father's hoarse, loud voice, saying, "I deny it, sir. Those who speak of the agricultural labourers in those terms are mere Cockneys."

He went into the conservatory, and there he met a group which showed him that the day was not to be all holiday.

Roland. Seen by him for the first time in furious anger, with his hands behind his back; tall, splendid, imperious; just at this moment, terrible to stolid, good John Mordaunt; Mrs. Maynard, as white as a sheet, but with her pretty face set in feline determination; and Mary Maynard in tears, with her face in her pocket-handkerchief.

It was Roland's turn to speak. "I ask you once more, madam, if this young lady's answer is dictated by you or not?"

"You asked her when I was not by, and she gave you her answer," said Mrs. Maynard, full of pluck, though gasping for breath. "You must take it, sir."

"Have I never been encouraged to speak to her as I spoke just now?" said Roland.

"Never for one instant," said Mrs. Maynard, most promptly, growing paler and paler, but, to do the woman justice, exhibiting enormous courage. "Perhaps you will deny that I nearly turned you out of my house at the beginning of last summer. You would wish to deny that?"

"But since?" said Roland.

"Let us have a finish and end of it, sir. My son has married a beggar to-day, my daughter shall not marry another to-morrow."

"Madam," said Roland, "I cannot conceive what you mean."

"You should not have made me lose my temper," said Mrs. Maynard; "but it is gone, and much with it. You cannot understand. By this sweet marriage of to-day, I am turned out of Maynard's Barton. I have but little provision, and I want provision, for I am getting old. I want provision in my daughter's house, now that my son has cast me out."

"Madam, you have five hundred a-year," blundered John Mordaunt.

"Oh, you are there, are you?" said Mrs. Maynard; "there are not any more of you, are there? Yes, young Mordaunt, I have five hundred a-year, which would make the whole of Master Roland's income, under certain circumstances. By the way, you being there, and having some sort of ox-like memory in you somewhere, will please to remember this—that this young lady's refusal *was* dictated by me; and that we wish you a very good afternoon."

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Maynard," said Roland; "you have only confirmed me in a half-formed plan. Mary, darling, good-bye. She won't have it, you see. Mary, my little darling, come here. I could appeal to your brother on any day but this; but I won't. Mary, your mother is too much for you. Come here, pretty little love, and let me kiss you."

And Mary came, and lay in his arms for one short minute, for she was as fond of him as it was in her nature to be fond of anything. And her mother let her; possibly, because John Mordaunt faced her suddenly to the right-about, so that the parting should be secret. He said, afterwards, that he would have pitched her into the flower-pots if she had offered to look on. Mrs. Maynard had a shrewd idea that this fate would befall herself, and so she kept quite quiet; but when her little fool of a daughter was released, and came back to her, she let her spite fly out. Coarsely, but quite to the purpose.

"Now," she said to Roland, "you fool, you can go and hang after Ethel; you blind idiot."

"That is exactly what I mean to do, madam," said Roland. "Good-bye, my little Mary; good-bye, my little darling."

So the two young men went to the drawing-room, and John Mordaunt said, "I can't make you out. I never thought you were a tender, sentimental fellow until now."

"I can't make myself out," said Roland. "In what follows, remember me at my best: it is not much to ask."

They were in time to see off the bride and bridegroom, and when they were gone, Roland got together Aunt Eleanor, Ethel, and John Mordaunt, and told them the whole story of his having proposed to Mary Maynard, and of his refusal.

Fiddlers came, and they danced. Roland danced with Ethel, and told her about his misfortune, and talked strange and odd talk to her, principally on this theme, "that classes could not understand one another till they thoroughly intermixed," which suited Ethel's Radicalism wonderfully. And Roland danced, as he rowed, in a masterly way. Aunt Eleanor came down, after sitting a time with her brother, and sniffed at them. She reported her brother as much better, and had herself dissuaded him from coming down stairs. Mrs. Evans came down after a time, and sat smiling at the dancers.

But at midnight a cry arose, "The bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him." It began by a feeble wail of a frightened nurse in the topmost corridor of the house, and it

ended in the silence of the ball-room, suddenly hushed. Squire Charles was dead, and Roland was Lord!

CHAPTER XXII.

His death was very sudden. The nurse had heard the very slightest movement in his bed, and coming to him, had found him quite dead. When the house was still as death itself, Roland went all alone and looked on death for the first time. It had the effect it usually has: it saddened him and ennobled him.

In older, wilder times, the sight of death was nothing; it is but little now in war. But in our carefully guarded domestic life, the sight of death, still more the first sight of death, has its full value. To appreciate, for the first time, the great fact of all, that some day or another the body most familiar to us will be stiff and cold, and never move again, but perish into the earth, is an era in a man's life. To recognize, for the first time, the inevitable; to feel that the face can never smile more which laughed at our jest but yesterday; to realize the wonderful change of all changes, makes most men think for a time. The feeling goes off after a few times, but the first time generally has its full effect. On Roland, full of strange schemes in that little-uttering head of his, it had actually more than its proper effect.

He had asked John Mordaunt to stay by him, and that leal soul had stayed. He knew where Roland was going when he took a candle from the table, and he knew where he had been when Roland came silently back, and set down the candle once more; but there was something in Roland's appearance which displeased John Mordaunt.

Roland certainly looked as handsome as ever; his personal gifts in this matter have been dwelt on before, possibly too often. But it seemed to honest John Mordaunt that the face was thinner, more pinched, and more narrow than he had ever seen it before, as though it had caught some reflection from the narrow, pinched face of the dead man who had put all worldly things behind him. John Mordaunt was disquieted. He was not a silent man when he thought it his duty to speak, and when he spoke (as we have seen before) he spoke to the purpose.

"Roland, old boy," he said, quietly, "though every one who has known you has liked you, yet I know, year after year, more entirely that no one has ever understood you; and I understand you less than ever at this moment."

"As how, Horatio?" said Roland, very quietly.

"A good name, Hamlet," said John Mordaunt; "that means confidence. Come, I will go about with you. You are sorry—you are desperately sorry, old man! Why don't you cry? You *can* cry, you know."

"Yes; I cried when I lost the Greek prize. I can cry for selfish vexation and wounded vanity, but I can't cry now. You would hardly expect a fellow who has dropped into eight thousand a year to bellow over it, would you?"

"*That* won't do, Roland. Don't lie."

"I suppose, not," said Roland. "I suppose, if you thought that I meant what I said, you would have seen the last of me."

"As you did not mean it, I will say yes."

"Well, you will see the last of me soon; for I am off out of this."

Not one word would John Mordaunt speak—not one assisting suggestion would he make. "He is going to tell me some folly, and he will do it better if he is left alone." So that young man remained silent.

"I am sick of the whole business,"

said Roland; "of the whole business, from beginning to end, and I am going to put an end to it. You shan't sit there like an image, Johnny; you shall answer me. Am I a reticent young man?"

"Most eminently so," said John Mordaunt, with a steady, ox-like face turned on him. "If you come to that, a deal too much so. *I* never could make you out: there is a cobweb in your brain somewhere, which *I* never could find. What foot do you halt on?"

"Am I a discreet young man?" asked Roland, "discreet among women, I mean; for I am a most bitter ass."

The thought of what was upstairs prevented John Mordaunt from laughing; but he said—

"Your discretion is so notorious that it has lost you friends."

"Suppose, then," said Roland, "that I were to tell you that I had made a most thundering and irretrievable fool of myself about a woman."

"I should not believe it. Oh, you mean that little doll you proposed to to-day, and who refused you at her mother's orders; I only say you are well out of it. I am sorry to say so much of the sister of an old boat-mate married this unhappy night; but I do my duty. Is that all?"

"No; I don't refer to her. I mean something about another woman."

"Then I am the last man to hear it, old fellow," said John Mordaunt. "I cannot tell you why, but I am the last man to listen to your confessions. I respect your grief profoundly, but I cannot help asking you how, with another affair on hand, you could have been drawn into a proposal, even to that feeble fool Mary Maynard?"

"I have not got one word to say for myself," said Roland, eagerly. "I have not got one single, solitary word to say for myself. Do you mark what I say, Johnny?"

"I mark it."

"What have I been in the happy little innocent party of boys from Gloucester, who have rowed together, swum together, learnt together, and squabbled together?"

"What have you been!" cried old Mordaunt: "the tie which has bound us together—our solemn, silent, glorious old Roland. Have we ever wavered in faith to you that you should distrust us? If you have erred, Roland, who are we to denounce you? Why, if that brother of mine, Jim, were to waver in his allegiance to you, I don't know what I would do to him,—I don't, upon my word."

"So you think of me, John Mordaunt; but your friendship misleads you. I have been only a purist and a prig."

"Come," said John Mordaunt, "we are not at the Union, you know. Take a bit of advice from a fool. If you have done any girl wrong, do her what right you can; marry her. Coming from me, of all men, that is honest counsel, Roland. Two wrongs don't make a right, any more than two and two make five. Now, listen to me, old fellow. Consult your Aunt Eleanor, and see if she does not confirm me. I am fearfully sorry about it, because I had dreamt that some day we might have been more like brothers than we are; and I cannot believe this even now. Why, Jim or I, or Ethel, would have gone to the stake for your honour. If you say it is so, it is: but it is a bitter thing for me to hear. Don't let Ethel hear of it, Roland," he added suddenly. "Don't let *her* guess that you are false and dishonoured."

Roland actually laughed. "You are all abroad, old man; you are scarcely wise in advising me to marry a woman who has proved herself unworthy of marriage. Do *you* believe that I would have kissed your sister to-day if I were dishonoured with another woman?

With regard to your argument of two and two always making four, some Cambridge men declare that when numbers get into their higher powers, two and two do not make four, but five; which causes them to deduce an argument against the immortality of the soul."

"By what process, in the name of goodness?" said John, buckling on his armour of Oxford precisionism in a moment.

"I am sure I don't know," said Roland. "The benighted souls don't learn their logic, you know. They confine their attention to mathematics, of which we know nothing."

John Mordaunt was pleased at the turn the conversation had taken. He might amuse Roland: and Roland looked dangerous.

"They and their mathematics! Well and good. Give me my logic. Give me one immovable axiom; say like one of Euclid's, 'A straight line is the shortest way you can go from Jerusalem to Jericho;' or, 'A point is no bigger than a footless stocking without any leg.' Give me an axiom like that, and let me work it down logically. Why, theology all depends on the original soundness of the proposition."

"Of what proposition?" asked Roland.

John Mordaunt gave him one—one in which most believe. But when Roland said, "Is that an axiom, then, and does all theology rest on that?" Mordaunt saw, with the deepest concern, that it was an axiom no longer with Roland.

"His faith is gone," he thought; "and he will never get on without one. At least, I don't know. Some do and some don't. I thought he was what the provost called 'sound.' I am all abroad about him now. Where is the row? Is it in his politics? Let me see."

"I say, Roland, you had better go to bed."

"I can't sleep. Let us talk. Do you mind?"

"I will talk till cock-crow to please you and myself. I wish we were at Balaclava now—at least, one of the four of us."

"I wish one of us was, meaning myself," said Roland.

"I wish we all four were, with Eddy steering. We would take the old four in past Fort Constantine, and they should never hit us till we ran her ashore in the careening harbour."

"Don't talk nonsense, old friend. All that is past. Still I should have liked to have had my hand in this business. I'll have it in the next, if it is only to carry a pair of colours. They should have swarmed into Balaclava at once, man—the British alone, I mean—and have let the French cut off the Russian retreat at Perekop. But what can you hope from a miserable country like this, which last swept away its cobwebs in its last real revolution two hundred years ago? The blessed and ever glorious French Revolution swept most cobwebs out of French eyes. They at least can produce generals — our old-world system cannot."

"India, old man!" said John Mordaunt. "Don't be foolish."

"India, I grant you," said Roland. "Would you kindly give me the list of our more famous generals in that province, now employed in the Crimea?"

This was certainly a "hit" for John Mordaunt; but he returned to the charge. "You don't speak up for the French Revolution, old fellow?"

Roland said, "I do. It is the finest thing that ever happened in Europe. Some of them went further than I should be inclined to go *now* Marat erred in intense love of his species; Robespierre erred in his puritanism; Danton in wordy ferocity. Carrier should never have been sent to Nantes; he committed errors there, and was a drunkard. Camille Desmoulins was a perfect fool; but

we exist by these men's deeds, and yet we spit when we mention them!"

"But, Roland," said John Mordaunt, "all this infernal nonsense about St. Just——"

"I did not mention him at all," said Roland, "you mentioned him; it was you who brought the name of that Antinous of the Revolution into the discussion. I suppose you will charge his beauty against him next. His hand is red; but was David's pure? Marat slew; but what did Joshua?"

"What *is* the meaning of this fantastic balderdash, Roland?"

"*I* don't know. I am sick of my life, and for no reason—at least for no reason which these wretched Philistines can give me. I have always had everything which could make life beautiful since I was a child; and I am sick of it. What is before me? The schools? Bah! A double-first and the compliments due to the honour of my college. And then to drop back on my position as a country gentleman? I tell you that I am utterly sick of, and that I utterly loathe, my whole future career. From this moment I gave it up. For me to drop back on to Oxford honours and turnips—I'll have none of it. Vive la Revolution! I am for India."

"Ho!" said old Mordaunt. "You are going to neglect the estate which God has given into your hands, to go a swash-bucklering among half-armed natives, are you?"

"I suppose that is about it, put your way," said Roland.

"And about Marat now?" said John Mordaunt. "I think you said that he proposed his thirty thousand assassinations on the ground of his intense love for his species?"

Rowland said, "You are travelling out of the record, Johnny; you don't know everything. I will lie down here and go to sleep."

And he went to sleep, and honest John Mordaunt watched him, and said, from time to time, "Poor lad! and so he has broken out just like Jimmy. You never know what is in them. It is the Norse blood. I wonder when this unreasoning Berserk strain in it will be bred out, and we shall have peace! It only comes in now when the world gets between them and their women. But fancy *Roland* going Berserk! I would never have dreamt of that."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE funeral was over a week, and Roland was in possession, *de jure* not *de facto*, for Roland was in London, and had not left his address.

This was extremely tiresome; because all sorts of things had to be done which could not be done without him: the will had to be proved among other things, for which Roland was necessary. Mrs. Evans, being in a state of imbecile grief, was of no use whatever. The family solicitor took the will over to Aunt Eleanor, at Pulverbatch, and asked her advice as to what they were to do, no answer being procurable from Roland. Aunt Eleanor told them it was no business of hers, and wanted to know what they would take after their drive. Roland's actions were becoming very eccentric. The solicitors asked, "Could she give them Roland's address?" and she answered, "Lord bless you, no." And the solicitors departed.

Aunt Eleanor had her trusty ally, Ethel Mordaunt, with her, and she told to her a deal more than she told to the solicitors.

These two, so singularly alike in character, but so far removed from one another in years, sat before the fire, in Eleanor Evans's room, at Pulverbatch, and Ethel knew that Aunt Eleanor was going to tell something, because she was so very cross.

No woman ever lived who could

keep a secret better than Aunt Eleanor. She loved it; but the effect of her parting with it was to make her very cross. A lady who gives away a diamond is apt to be cross after she has done so, and even before. Ethel knew that she was going to hear something the moment that Aunt Eleanor said—

"Get some wine and water, child, and let us go to bed. Don't sit there looking so ridiculously handsome. What have you done with your beauty, child? It is a gift. Have you done anything with it? if so, what?"

"Much the same as you have done with yours, Miss Evans," answered Ethel. "Nothing."

"That is pert; don't be pert. Eddy is pert; but I allow him liberties which I should never dream of allowing to you. Did you ever get it into your head that you were a great fool?"

"I have thought so for a long time; and have thought that, in spite of all you have said to me, that you encouraged me more in my folly than any one else."

"Are you going to give up your folly?"

"No, Miss Evans. There are some follies which we cannot give up. I suppose that you are the only one who knows anything of mine. You have never betrayed me?"

"Child, child! you have betrayed yourself a hundred times. Child, where is the curl of his, which poor Jim cut from his head, and sent to you in a letter? Where is that curl?"

"It is in my desk. Has Jim betrayed me?"

"No, my dear; only you told me the whole business yourself, you know. You really should remember. Do you love him still?"

"Yes, Miss Evans."

"I don't believe he cares twopence for you, you know," said Aunt Eleanor. "If I thought he did, I'd say so; but I don't think it, and so I won't say it; and you are well out of it. Lord help that man's wife, if she didn't do what he told her!"

"Roland is very gentle," said Ethel.

"Yes, my dear; but he has a terrible quality, that of silence. He can hold his tongue for days and days together; and that quality will madden a high-spirited woman into either utter submission or furious rebellion; it is a toss-up which."

"Is that so?" said Ethel, only half understanding her.

"Yes, it *is* so," said Aunt Eleanor, sharply; "you can't understand, of course. No one ever believed you could; but Eddy can. *He* told me of it first; Eddy says that when they are in for one of those idiotic boat-races, he never knows Roland's tactics until they are off, and then he forbids Eddy to speak, unless under orders. And again, here is a letter from a leading Oxford Don, about him: 'Dearest Eleanor,' *n'importe*, that is all *façon de parler*, you know. 'Your Eddy is—' much he knows Eddy! 'your Roland is more incomprehensible than when Kennedy sent him up: there is some twist in his brain, with all his reticence and discretion.' So there is in Allan Gray's," added Aunt Eleanor, rubbing her nose with the letter.

"Do you correspond with the Dean of St. Paul's?" asked Ethel.

"Yes, miss, I do," said Aunt Eleanor, "and he was in love with me once, and I am in love with him now. What do you think of that, for instance?"

Ethel had nothing to say on this subject; but for want of something to say, she said that she seemed, from Aunt Eleanor's description, to have had a happy escape from Roland.

"I don't know about *that*," said Aunt Eleanor; "no man is worth a hang if he has not a cobweb in his brain which makes him do something. Roland has, and you have

not. I doubt whether you are worthy of Roland, do you know?"

"Has the Dean of St. Paul's a cobweb in his brain, Miss Evans?" asked Ethel.

"He is an old man, and I am an old woman, and we are not going to marry," said Aunt Eleanor. "Don't be pert, and exchange shots, and I will tell you something. Roland is mad. Roland is madder than all the hatters at Lincoln and Bennett's. He is in one of his moods—one of those moods in which he has won his boat-races. Ethel, the succession to the property will be disputed, and he won't even send his address to his solicitors."

"His succession disputed!" said Eleanor.

"Aye," said Miss Evans, "and warmly too. Your father has been with me to-day, and has accused me of lying, which I never did. I told him, what I believed to be the truth at the time, that the claim was the old claim, and that there was no danger from it. He does not like the look of matters at all, and he says that, unless we can move Roland from his donkey mood, everything will go seriously wrong. And the solicitors have been here with the provisions of your father's will. Why, I have denounced them to him as idiotic for this ten years, and he promised to alter them, but he has not done so. Your father, Mordaunt, says the estate won't carry the lawyer's expenses, if Roland don't move. It will be the greatest succession case ever known."

"But who claims Roland's estates," asked Ethel.

"One Allan Gray," said Aunt Eleanor, rubbing her nose,

"Allan Gray!" said Ethel, "I never heard of him. And who are the witnesses to his claim?"

"I am sorry to say that I am one," said Miss Evans. "Old Mother Gray and Myrtle are others. The case is strong. Your father says that it is a lie from beginning to end—but your father is your father."

"Will Roland be left a beggar?" asked Ethel.

"I don't know about beggars," said Miss Evans. "He won't have any money."

"What a splendid thing that will be for him!" said Ethel. "Why it will be the making of him."

"Wants making, does he?" said Aunt Eleanor. "Well, perhaps he does; as for being a beggar, he don't come of a begging sort. He shan't want money though, even if I have to rob Eddy. But Eddy shall give it to him. I don't approve of Roland, myself, I allow. And not for all the Rolands on earth shall Eddy be one penny the poorer. I will work more into pigs, my dear, if things go wrong with Roland. I hate pigs, but they pay. I will work into the pig business to make it up to Eddy, if things go wrong with Roland. Eddy shan't suffer in any way."

"How you love Eddy!" said Ethel, in a wondering way.

"You must love something, and I love him," said Aunt Eleanor, suddenly. "I have stores of suppressed love in my heart, and I have given all that I could spare from the Dean of St. Paul's, and from you, and from your brother John Mordaunt, to Eddy. And I promise you that there is precious little left for you three to divide among you."

And so there comes before one, dimly seen in the distance, the figure of a woman who has cast herself groaning against a wall, and there has fallen in a heap in the corner.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THAT Roland behaved like a fool I do not deny. Had he made such a fool of himself at thirty, he would not have been worth writing about. But he was only twenty-one.

In looking for a precedent for his remarkable conduct, just look at your own conduct when you were twenty-one. Did you not do things then which you would not do now? Did you not do generous and carelessly foolish things which you would not do now? Why I who speak know well a man with an estate of eight thousand a year—a shrewd sensible fellow enough in most things, yet a man who is not given to spend money on himself; who has crippled himself for the best part of his life by an act of careless fantastic generosity, wilder in one way than Roland's. In the Australian madness of 1852, how many men do I know who, sick of things here, gave up safe positions in England out of the pure old English spirit of adventure. How many? as many as were Mrs. Nickleby's lovers.

I am only contending for the fact that I could give the names of at least a dozen men who at an early age made as great fools of themselves as Roland. I am not excusing him; I am excusing myself from a charge of improbability. Roland was a very extraordinary young man. If he had not been, we would not have told this story, but another.

He was sick of it all. He had looked at it all, and it seemed that there was not one spark of truth in it, from beginning to end. His qualities were, a sharp clear brain, a powerful, well-ordered body, and a never-ceasing longing for excitement and power over his fellows. As silent and as beautiful as a fox, but with all the large-heartedness of the dog: the animal who cannot be taught class-distinctions. He had been often excited by his father's army stories; they had warmed an enthusiasm which needed no warming; and he had tried to reduce them to practice by boat-racing. When he won the University sculls he thought himself as fine a fellow as any who fought at Waterloo. But all this was insufficient for him, and his future was fairly before him now. He hated it. And the man who had made him hate it worse than any one, was little Sir Jasper Meredith.

It was not in one, or in two, or in three dozen conversations, that that shrewd little cripple contrived to disgust Roland with his future career. Nevertheless he was the man who had the principal hand in doing it. Don't dedicate your son to any particular career, if there is any go in him at all. I once saw a boy of twelve come into a roomful of ladies, and I heard his mother say, "There comes another young clergyman." Whereupon the ladies rejoiced and fal-lalled; but from that moment the boy's fate was sealed: he would die sooner than be a parson. I am only speaking of a fact which I think typical. English and American lads of *mettle* and use will not allow themselves to be disposed of without their own will. Lads without mettle will allow this liberty to be taken with them—which accounts for a particular kind of curate; and furthermore, to carry out the argument, for a particular kind of barrister, the caricatured Buzfuz.

Sir Jasper Meredith had a very strong love, an almost feminine love, for Roland. Roland was in a way his god. The little man could take no physical effort, and had a large brain, and so he used to lie and dream. And he used to lie and dream of all he would do if he were Roland; and moreover, what he would not do if he were Roland. And he came to the conclusion that Roland was wasting his energies by this ridiculous boat-racing, and put the matter before him several dozens of times; which was one matter; but he proposed Roland's career for him, which was quite another.

"My career!" said Roland to him. "A brave one for a man like me! Jasper, you are silly. Schools, you

say. I could do well there—and then? Look at" (supply the name for yourself). "Landlord? Why any one could be *that*. Magistrate? Man, my temper is not sufficiently good, and my prejudices are too strong. I should convict every poacher, and let off every thief. Chairman of quarter-sessions? My dear man, I should say to the grand jury, 'Get your idiotic business over as soon as you can, and let us get out of this.' And to the petty jury, 'You boxful of thundering idiots, if you sit there in a row after your last verdict, I'll shy something at you;' and that wouldn't do, you know. I don't rank the intelligence of my countrymen high. Then again, Jasper, as member of Parliament, I am a loose bird with my money; but four thousand pounds, you know. If the dear old dad would tell us what he spent, it would be nigh twelve thousand pounds. You did not know your father, did you?"

"No," said Sir Jasper.

"Nor mother? Then you don't know what it is."

"You mean their death?"

"No, I don't," said Sir Jasper. "You come into eight thousand a year when your father dies."

"And I'd give it up to-morrow to keep him alive," said Roland. "There is no company like my father's. He is a true-born Radical."

By which it may be seen that at this time Roland was as good a Radical as the rest of us. Mr. Disraeli was no better Radical than Roland. Mr. Bright was Conservative compared to him. He had asked himself the question which all young men of any go ask themselves. "What is it all about? What does it mean?" And he had answered to himself that it was all words, and did not mean anything.

And moreover, he had been disappointed in love, which made a great difference. Men who have met with disappointment in that line, tell us that it plays the mischief with a fellow. Or to put it in loose scientific language (which is always the best method), that it superinduces a phase of the Epithumia, always underlying, and to some extent influencing, the action of the Thumos, and in an extreme case that of the Logos. This being an extreme case, Roland's Logos was actually affected. His Thumos, or simply intellectual part, told him that Mary Maynard was a fool, and that he was another. His Epithumia, or sentimental part, told him that he was very fond of her, and that he would make a fool of himself for her; and so his Logos was affected, and he set to work to do so; and succeeded.

One is very sorry about poor Roland's Logos getting affected in this manner. It merely means that he lost his temper and made an ass of himself. The only thing I wish to call your attention to, is, that men like Roland, when they lose their temper, are a long while before they find it again. Perhaps reasonable beings will understand Roland's position better by my saying this. He had succeeded in everything, in this too, and now was thrown overboard by a girl whom he half despised, but sentimentally loved. And thus he made a fool of himself. I need not tell you that he made a very discreet, decorous, high-minded, self-sacrificing fool of himself; made himself as great a fool as Bayard, Sidney, or Willoughby. I only want you to believe that his folly is probable.

CHAPTER XXV.

EASTWARD! The dear old man of Waterloo was dead, and his voice was to be heard no more for ever by the son who loved him so well.

Was he sorry? He was deeply sorry; but beneath his sorrow there was a depth of gladness immeasurable. Roland was his own master:

no one had the right to advise and direct him now. A son of freedom was now free, and felt the blood moving in his veins. His step was taken, and he was going to dispense with all vain babble which might defeat the carrying out of his object. Is he the first fool that has cast all to the winds for a fancy? Did not one poor boy slink into a dishonoured grave only yesterday? But from the ruin of no such quest as Roland's.

Roland was in London, and had not yet been home. At ten o'clock one morning he was shown into a somewhat dingy anteroom, where there were many strange men waiting, almost all in uniform, few of whom seemed to know one another, but who were all lounging about, and, as many as could manage, looking out of window.

They seemed very restless and idle, and were mostly in complexion blonde. Roland sat modestly down near the door and looked at them. He said to himself, "They are a class; they want individuality." As a general remark this was certainly true. Still there were exceptions. He selected one in an instant from among these brave lads, so soon to be gathered in the harvest of death. Roland said the other day that he must be a born general to have selected that man as a good officer the first moment he saw him.

He was a small man, with rather a long nose, and very keen grey eyes—eyes out of which looked diligence and persistent duty. Roland looked on him first because he was unlike the usual style of British officers, and Roland thought that, had he not been in uniform, he would have looked mean. Two or three friends of his got him to strip to the waist a few years afterwards; he did not look mean then, with twenty-eight sword-cuts on him, and probably the best-won Victoria Cross ever given hanging on his coat when he put it on again. This man stood to be slashed almost to death because he would not leave a common soldier.

The next man who took his eye was a gigantic cavalry officer, with three hundred pounds' worth of fripperies upon him, who stood in the middle of the room, and had found two men whom he knew. This officer gave intense delight to Roland. At last he had seen a Plunger. And this Plunger actually said "Haw!" before, as Roland put it, he went into the major term of his syllogism. He was the only cavalry officer whom Roland ever met who used that strange interjection. My experience, smaller than Roland's, confirms this. I have heard a cavalry officer say, "Hum! Haw! Damme!" *on the stage.* But not off it.

This tremendously great man stood talking in the middle of the room to two other officers. There must have been some argument before the time Roland came in, for the first he heard of it was the cavalry officer re-opening the previous case, by saying—

"Haw!"

Now I shall hear a real Plunger," said Roland, and he listened intently.

"Haw! You put it so," said the Plunger. "I on my part put in this manner. I saw that man (married, you understand) walking with a common woman in the streets: and I did my best to get him kicked out. And I got him kicked out."

"But as father of the regiment, you should have given him more hearing," said a meek little officer who was talking to him.

"Sir, as father of the regiment, I got him kicked out. I would have kicked my own son out of doors for such a thing, had one of my sons been capable of it. I am not merely father of my officers, I am father of my men. And my men would neither follow us nor respect us, if we saw such things done and made no sign."

"It was a little irregular, was it not?"

"Yes, sir," said the great Plunger; "I doubt it was. I doubt that the irregularity of that court-martial means (to me) a fine of ten thousand pounds. They will take the regiment from me, but my men will remember that I only tried to prevent their being commanded by a scoundrel."

"But it was irregular," said the little officer.

"It was," said the dragoon, "and I must pay the piper. If he had not been married, I would never have said a word. But it is as it is. I won't demoralize the regiment by having married officers degrading their order in this way. I am not clever, like you, sir, but I see that unless some moral tone is kept up among the married officers, our regiment, any regiment, will go to the devil. Let Mike O'Dowd take my boys into action next time. He is a better man than ever I was."

And Roland said—"I like this. This will do. These are men." Roland had brought his silly boat-racing to a strange school. If he had wanted to attend to his interests, he had better have been far away. If he had wanted to join himself to the heart of a great nation, in her deadliest, darkest hour, he was in the right place.

He sat near the door all alone, and watched. A slight, very handsome man came, and found the great cavalry officer. This man also was noticeable, very noticeable indeed in a military way, for he had seen an objectionable Russian battery, which was playing mischief with our people, and some one said that it ought to be taken; and the young man said that he would take it if three would follow him. And three followed him, but he missed them, and thought they had gone back; and so leaped into the battery alone, shooting right and left with his revolver, believing that the bonny broad acres were gone to his cousin for evermore. But no. His men were with him, and the good young gentleman wears his cross at his button-hole to this day.

"What a pretty fellow you are!" thought Roland, who was a prettier fellow than he. "I like this." Roland, looking more closely, came to the conclusion that the V.C. was as pretty a fellow as he had ever seen. Only there came in a prettier one.

A tall and solemn young man, with a black beard, a very deliberate young man, who knew his own mind. The young man, seeing before him a perfect flower-garden of scarlet and gold, geranium and calceolaria, turned to Roland, sitting near the door, and bending down his well-turned head—

"Are you the clerk?"

"No," said Roland, behind his hand, "I am come here by appointment, after my commission."

"Ho!" said Lord A——. "You and I can sit together then. Is it a full dress levée?"

"I believe that it is," said Roland.

"You don't seem to know who I am," said Lord A——.

"I was waiting to see whether you would remember who I was my lord," Roland answered, coolly.

Lord A—— looked more closely, and said—"Why, you are Evans, of Paul's. You don't mean to say that you have left the University! 'What dost thou from Gottenberg, old friend?' I thought you were going to stick to the paternal acres, and go through the real course of training for Parliament."

"I am sick of it all," said Roland, "and I am going into the army."

"I am sick of it, also," said the young lord, very gravely; "but I am going to stay at home and try to mend it. How very foolish the young lady must be."

"What young lady, my lord?" said Roland, blushing deeply.

"The young lady who has caused you to take such a singular resolution."

"Do you know then ——" said Roland.

"Not a word," said Lord A——; "only when I see a young fellow of talent and chances entering the army, I guess there is a young lady at the bottom of it."

Roland was perfectly aghast at this wonderful instance of shrewdness. He did not know, country bumpkin as he was, that Lord A—— had known more of the world when he was fourteen than Roland did when was twenty. He had absolutely nothing to say. Lord A—— said, "Who is the other man?"

Roland, fairly off his balance with wonder, said, without hesitation—

"Sir Jasper Meredith."

"Why, he's not a marrying man! This is the doing of the young lady's mother, I fear. Why, before I left Oxford, I have seen you carrying that little, venomous-tongued heap of bones about in your arms. Yes; this is the mother's work."

Roland was more aghast than ever, and Lord A—— intensely enjoyed his confusion.

"This sort of thing often happens with our people, said Lord A——; "but why Jessamy is to run away and 'list, because Jimmy's mother has manœuvred for another thousand a year or so, I cannot see. Don't do it; don't ''list.' We want fellows like you. You know how I hate your extreme democracy; I have had no chance of showing you how I love you."

There was nothing in Roland which could make him resist this brave man, and he said, standing up, and speaking in a whisper, "I have made a fool of myself elsewhere."

"I hope not," said Lord A——, coldly.

"I mean in this way," said Roland, eagerly: "I begin to think that—that—things might have been different in another quarter. Do you see?"

Lord A—— nodded, and the look in his eyes—he was a bridegroom of two months' standing—encouraged Roland to say more.

"If I can win honours," said Roland, whispering to him, "I will bring them back, and lay them at her feet. I will say to her, 'Ethel, I never understood you'——"

"And all that," said Lord A——. "I think you really *had* better 'list, for a time. But it is very strange; I asked Fitzgerald about you, and he told me that you were so self-contained and so silent. How is it that you have let out so much to me about your private affairs—to a man you have hardly seen?"

Roland was wondering himself, and was trying to answer, when a clerk came out of the inner room, and coming up to Lord A——, said, "The minister waits Lord A——'s pleasure."

Lord A—— went off at once, and had nearly got to the inner door, when he turned and came quickly back to Roland.

"Do you want infantry or cavalry?" he whispered, hurriedly.

"I want service," said Roland.

"There is no chance of service. The Crimea is only a break-down: glorious! but still a break-down. You can't get service. We shall not meddle again in European affairs. You can't get service. Guards?"

"India," said Roland.

"You might get a chance of seeing service there, certainly," said Lord A——; and he paused, although the great man was waiting.

"If it fell about, that the darkest midnight of the darkest night which ever fell upon a nation, fell on this nation, would you? Yes, you would—would the 140th do? they are an old-fashioned regiment, and still wear cowry shells on their trappings."

"Any regiment which will show me service, my lord," said Rolan d.

"And Ethel?" Lord A—— whispered to him, and went his way to the inner room.

And Roland was left to his own thoughts; but not for long. For he was, for the first time, among a section of the men who help to govern our Empire of nearly 200,000,000 of souls. He was naturally interested; he was soon more interested.

"Nhow I'll swear it on the Stone of Blarney," said a smallish, handsome man—Norse-Celt, if it mattered; "I swear it on the very Stone of Blarney itself that you're wrong. 'Tis West is to have the recrooten in Dhublin, and East is to have the eightieth."

The cavalry-colonel, to whom this was addressed, said, first of all, "Haw!" (I have mentioned before that he was the only officer I ever met who did), and when he had said "haw!" he said "That is a mistake; East should have had the recruiting, and West the colonelcy."

The short man said, "Bedad, it is all betux and betune—six of one, and half a dozen of the other. Kiss the Blarney Stone, colonel; it is yourself that has never kissed that same."

"Why on earth are you talking Irish to night, X——!" said a very solemn and quiet voice; and Roland, looking up, saw that a blonde, quiet-looking man, of about forty, was looking over the shoulder of the short, handsome man who was talking Irish.

"Only keeping my tongue in," said the short man. "I am forced to talk all languages, as you know. West has got the recruiting at Dublin, and if they had given it to a man who could talk Irish, as I can, we should have a thousand more recruits every year."

"True enough for you," said the last comer.

Said the cavalry-colonel: "Haw! My fellows would always have followed me, to the devil. I can't talk Irish to them, though. I'd learn it if I could. I like the men, and the men like me. There are half a dozen men in my regiment who won't get on decently without a flogging; and there's two officers in my regiment that I should dearly like to flog. But I can't, by the rules of the service. However, all said and done, I can take my regiment into action without any chance of a shot from behind."

Roland had sat staring his eyes out during all this; but now he saw what he had always wished to see: a really great man.

He was a great man in more senses than one, for he was six foot two, over-topping the cavalry-colonel. And he knew everybody intimately: at least everybody except Roland, and he bowed even to him. "I'll know everybody some day," said Roland. But meanwhile he admired. The clerk showed Roland's friend, Lord A——, out of the minister's private room, and the tall new-comer caught that young man, and said to him, "I want to see the minister *at once*," and he waited among the others.

Roland's Oxford friend, Lord A—, came straight to him. He said, laying his hand on Roland's shoulder, "Have you changed your mind?"

"No, my lord. I do not come of a family who change their minds easily."

"Ethel? Will she change her mind?"

"It wants no changing," said Roland.

"Then you must go," said Lord A——. "May God go with you! But, Evans, in the dark, dim night which is coming (O God, may morning come after it), think of *this*. Think of what we might make India if we kept her, and think of what she would be if we lost her. If you are to die, die for keeping India till we have civilized her. You will find

it all straight in there. I have come to him on one petition, and I have given over my own and urged yours." And so Lord A—— departed, and was seen no more.

Roland stepped through a softly shutting door, and was in the presence of the minister, a pale and very thoughtful-looking man, of about forty, deeply sunk in an easy-chair; he was reading a letter, which he held in his hand, and he turned his face from it to Roland, with—

"So you wish to leave your books for the army, do you? A strange resolution. Your friend, who has just left me, has given a most brilliant account of your prospects."

"I am tired of England," said Roland. "I fear I am a spoilt child."

"Well, sir, we are not the party to grumble, at all events. You are late in applying, but in consideration of your father's services, we will do everything we possibly can for you. You may consider the matter as settled."

And so he came out, looking brighter about the eyes, taller and grander than when he went in. And there met him an enormously tall man, with a very gentle, quiet, and clever face, who said to him, "Is the minister disengaged, sir?"

And Roland, knowing who he was, and feeling the pride that any honest lad feels for serving those who have proved themselves really true and great servants of the State, said, "I will ask the clerk, my lord."

"I thought you *were* the clerk," said his lordship, laughing. "Pray forgive me! But the clerks are getting to look so like soldiers since they have taken to the moustache, that one is puzzled. I see the Colonel Heavy has plunged into the Audience Chamber. Are you in the army?

"I almost dare say so, my lord," said Roland.

Lord B—— sighed. "Are *you* going as food for powder? You are old for the army, are you not?"

"My father was a Waterloo man, and the minister has promised me a commission. He was Captain Evans, of the 140th."

"Was he in the House?"

"For two Parliaments," said Roland, "in old times."

"Yes, yes; was he Evans of Tyn-y-Bald, or Evans of Llandavid, or Evans of Eglwystafid?"

"Neither, my lord; he was Evans of Stretton Castle."

"Aye, aye! I see, I see. A Shropshire Evans. I thought you were a Welsh Evans, Yes, yes! Your father married a daughter of old Cecil Meredith, who ratted on Catholic Emancipation. The present man, I am told, is a cripple. Yes, your grandfather Meredith was a silent member; in fact, I never heard him open his mouth. Mum Meredith, yes. And so your father is dead. Dear, dear! How men drop. You have come into the whole of Stretton, then?"

"Yes, my lord," said Roland, aghast.

"Well, manage your property. It will take you all your time. You have actually more acres than I have; but I find it hard to do my duty as I would wish it done. Why are you going into the army? Why don't you attend to your property, and come into Parliament? You can't manage your property if you go into the army. I suppose," added he, laughing, "that Miss Mordaunt wants to see you in a fine coat? Go into the yeomanry. You will look quite as fine in her eyes. Stay, I must go; here is the colonel coming out. Mind, lastly, always to keep to your father's principles; be an honest Whig, as he was, and you will come to no grief. Good-bye."

Roland left the room lost in wonder. Here was a man, whom he had seen once or twice, in holiday visits

to the House of Commons, recently ennobled for great service; a man whom Roland conceived to be among the kings of men. And this man knew more about himself than he did—Roland had never dreamt that this man had ever heard of him in his life; but he knew everything. Why, he was only wrong on one single thing; he had made a mistake about Ethel Mordaunt, using her name, when he meant Mary Maynard. It was a miracle to Roland. What earthly interest could this great man have in him and his affairs?

The reason was not very far to seek, if Roland had known anything at all of the world. His father had "dropped," and he (Roland) was the head of a house with very considerable territorial influence. If Roland had only known the fact, his quiet and, as he thought, foolish neighbour, the great Whig, Sir Spium Goggleston, had been looking out of his spectacles at Roland for a long time, and had been reporting on him. He had found out the secret of Squire Charles' heart at the boat-race at Shrewsbury. He got the happiest reports of Roland's furious Radicalism at Oxford. He had looked up Mrs. Maynard, who being strongly for Mary's union with Sir Jasper Meredith, had lied nobly, and told him that Roland would marry Ethel. He had looked up Aunt Eleanor, who hated him and had kept him waiting in a cold room for half an hour, and then violently scolded him on account of a sitting of Crevecœur eggs, which she had bought from Lady Goggleston, for which Aunt Eleanor had paid five shillings, but which had been so shamefully jolted in transmission that none of them came out. (In fact, Aunt Eleanor expressed her determination to County Court Lady Goggleston for the money; but don't mention this.) Sir Spium left that house, it might be said, naked and wounded. Still Aunt Eleanor, in her temper, had assisted him with regard to his report at head-quarters. She had said, in the argument about the eggs, several things which she might just as well have left alone. Goggleston had introduced Mary Maynard's name; and Aunt Eleanor, in repudiating her, had unhappily introduced Ethel's. For which she could have bitten her tongue out.

So Goggleston, by hook and by crook, had reported this about Roland. A splendid unencumbered property, tenants well treated, and work like sheep for the Whigs. Carries with him the families of Maynard, the head of which house has just married his sister; and Mordaunt, to the eldest young lady of which house he is engaged to be married. Roland was a most important young man. He never dreamt it; but with a possible dissolution he *was*."

A Liberal whip knows all about *you*, if you are of any importance. But a Tory whip knows all about you and your friends too, if you have any.

That, one would suspect, is one of the secrets of the Conservative organization which has beaten us, here and there, just lately. If Sir Spium Goggleston had sent his wife instead of going himself, she would probably have found out the relations between Roland and Ethel. One effect of which would have been that Roland, while he was walking towards Allan Gray's lodgings, would not have been wondering why the great old Whig had made such an abominable mistake as to connect his name with Ethel's.

But the streets were empty, and he whistled as he went.

CHAPTER XXVI.

WHEN Roland knocked at the door of Allan Gray, he had forgotten all about the great men he had seen, and all the things they had said. For he had received a very curious letter from Allan Gray, and he was thinking over it.

The door was opened by Mrs. Gray, whom Roland knew. He was very polite to her, and he passed into the parlour on the right, where Allan Gray was sitting in state, with papers on the table before him.

Allan Gray, less trained than Roland, bowed solemnly, and brought him to the fire. "Indeed, and it is cold to-night," said Roland. "A fire is a good thing, and in this instance it amounts to a personal obligation."

Allan Gray could not make head or tail of this beginning. He bowed stiffly, and said:

"I had not anticipated the honour of this interview."

"Lord love the man, you said you would not object, and now I have come you say that you had not anticipated,—and so on—" said Roland. "Why, if any two men in England want a great talk together to-night, it is you and I."

"I thought my case was so strong that you would scarcely dare to meet me except by deputy."

"Lord love the man, again. What is his case? As for daring, I tell you point-blank, that I dare do anything, save wrong."

Allan Gray had never seen coolness of this kind before. He said—

"You received my letter, sir?"

"Yes," said Roland. "It seems that you are going to dispute my succession to Stretton Castle. I can't ask you on what grounds, because, don't you see, that would be unfair and ungentlemanly on my part. I can only say that, from all I have ever heard of you from Eddy, you are much fitter to have it than I am. I have the will to do good, you have the way. Why on earth should we talk about the matter?"

"I wished to talk business," said Allan Gray, utterly puzzled.

"What on earth would become of the lawyers if we talked our own business over," said Roland. "Here am I, gazetted on next Tuesday. My dear man, how can I talk business with you? If you had got a new and very glorious career before you, would *you* want to talk on business which had much better be left to your lawyer?"

"I would really be more in earnest about it, sir," said Allan Gray.

"I will be perfectly in earnest about it," said Roland. "Tell me, once again, what is the matter? We will begin *de novo*."

▲ ▲

"I am going to dispute your claim to the inheritance."

"Stretton?"

"Exactly. My case is complete, and is a very strong one. What is yours?"

"I have not the wildest idea," said Roland, laughing.

Allan Gray was actually angry. "I never believed you frivolous," he said, sternly, "and this is frivolity, sir. If it is intended as an insult to me, I despise it."

Roland was on the high horse at once. "My good friend," he said, "you have called me frivolous. Now it is well known that, whatever I may be, I am not that."

"You are treating a great question very frivolously, sir."

"*I* don't know anything about its being a great question," said Roland. "It is possible enough that you may be heir to the property which I at present consider mine: the succession has been disputed before now. I am not in the least degree frivolous when I laugh at the idea of discussing with you a question which, before it is finished, will be discussed by the best legal heads in the land. You have instructed your attorneys, I suppose? I shall at once instruct mine. And from that moment, my dear Mr. Gray, the lowest messenger in the courts of law will have no more influence over the case than you or I."

This obvious piece of common sense rather staggered Allan Gray, but he said—

"*I* intend to direct *my* lawyers."

"Mine," said Roland, "are, I am happy to say, not fools enough to allow of any interference whatever. Are you trained to the law?"

"No."

"Nor I either," said Roland. "It is against my interest, but I will give you this piece of advice. You leave your lawyers alone. Come to India with me, and let them fight it out. Only don't let us quarrel. Yours is the old Cecil claim. Have you got any money?"

"No," said Allan, quite unable to cope with Roland's extreme coolness.

"Then your solicitors can scarcely be respectable men, for this is a *great* speculation. We knew of it before, you know, and we can turn it at every point. Who are your men?"

Allan Gray mentioned a house, "most undeniable," as the horsey men say. Even Roland knew their names as those of leading and most respectable men.

"By Jove!" he said. "Have *they* taken up the Cecil claim?"

"I know of no Cecil claim," said Allan Gray. "My claim comes from this simple fact. I have the most unimpeachable evidence that I am your elder brother by your father's previous marriage. Of that there is no earthly doubt whatever. The names of my attorneys will guarantee that. Their respectability, on the one hand, and their well-known cautiousness on the other, would be guarantee that they would not have taken up the case of a penniless jeweller's *journeyman* on speculation unless they believed it. I am, I believe, perfectly sure of that part of my case."

"My elder brother!" said Roland.

"Undoubtedly so," said Allan Gray, "and, what is more, your legitimate elder brother."

"I cannot believe *that* part of it," said Roland, after a minute's thought. My father must have known whether he was married to your mother or whether he was not; and to accuse him of neglecting or not acknowledging a legitimate son, is to insult his memory. I assure you, in the most temperate manner, that you are miles wrong in your estimate of my father's character if you consider him capable of such a thing."

"He never knew of my existence, said Allan. "A fraud was practised on him by a foolish woman who loved him——"

"Well, that is all a matter for the lawyers," said Roland. "You need not show your hand to *me*, of all people. We will fight it out fair and square, lawyer to lawyer. *I* don't see any reason for any personal rancour between us. I want to know nothing at all——"

Roland, who had been sitting hitherto, rose at this moment, and walked hurriedly up and down the room. Allan Gray spoke three times to him before he answered, and then his answer seemed to be scarcely to the purpose.

"I want to ask you one question, and one only, as from one gentleman to another. I assure you that it is only on sentimental grounds, and can do you no harm at all. In the list of the witnesses which you have to call, is there one Mrs. Maynard, of Maynard's Barton?"

"There is," said Allan Gray.

"Hah! thank you. That will account. I will ask no more questions. Well, if you can prove yourself to be my elder brother. I shall not be ashamed of you. Do your duty by the tenantry. I shall be sorry to lose my money, but probably you will do your duty by those few sheep in the wilderness better than I could have done. For I am sick of England. I will be a bigger man than you, even if you gain your point. Well, goodbye, and the worst of luck to you in this matter, and the best in all others."

"I cannot conceive that you understand the great gravity of your position, sir," said Allan Gray. "Have you read your father's will."

"You mean, do I know your strong point? Yes, I am a very clever and shrewd person, with a very high education; not unused to debate either. And from the beginning of this conversation I perceived the awful hold which the wording of my father's will gives you, if you can only prove your identity and legitimacy. The will runs, 'To my eldest son,' never mentioning my name. I saw that point a little time ago."

"Upon my honour, sir, I did not give you credit for such shrewdness," said Allan Gray, honestly.

Roland drew his head up and laughed nearly silently at him. "You mean that you thought you could match your intellect with mine. Poor dear! I can show you a few other points to amuse you if you will. Eddy is provided for by his aunt, and so my father has omitted his name altogether My sister is mentioned as 'My only daughter,' and so you can't hurt *her*. Good-night; and as a parting piece of advice, never word your own will if you make a dozen."

And so Roland departed, leaving Allan Gray lost in wonder at his recklessness and *bonhomie*.

Gray, having lived a narrow, money-seeking life all his time, could not understand Roland's carelessness at all; and after long thought, came to the conclusion that Roland thought that he was perfectly safe, and that hence came his easy bearing.

But it was quite otherwise. To Roland, who was a shrewd, clear-headed fellow, matters looked extremely ugly. What on earth was there to prevent his father having married in a secret way before? It was quite likely. Many men had done so. If Gray could prove *that*, the foolish wording of his father's will would point at once to Allan Gray as his father's heir. And—

He determined to knock up Mr. Somes, the head of the London branch of his Shrewsbury lawyers, and speak to him about it. Mr. Somes was over his dessert, and alone, and Roland, after a few preliminary civilities, opened the matter to that gentleman.

[illegible] remember you not bad-[illegible]"

[illegible] that poor Jasper [illegible] But [illegible]?"

[illegible] start [illegible] Very [illegible] went away, and [illegible] himself [illegible] pocket-book [illegible] —

[illegible]

us. I am sure I don't know whatever we shall do. I suppose you have not heard that Sir Jasper Meredith is engaged to Mary Maynard?"

"Impossible!" cried Ethel.

"True, young lady, for all that. Mrs. Maynard announces it everywhere, most openly. Well," she continued, rubbing her nose, "I am sorry for the little cripple, but it has saved our Roland, at all events. *Now*, perhaps, he will believe people when they tell him. I don't myself know what the man's intellect is made of, not to see through such a woman as *that*. In some senses he had better go where he is going: he leaves no fool behind to watch his interests."

"Will he go abroad with his regiment, then, Miss Evans?"

"Lord bless you, didn't you know? He is going to India for years and years." And when, with kindly shaking hand, she had administered the blow, she was silent, leaving the girl quite to herself.

Ethel was silent also. At one time she breathed a little quicker, and there was a fluttering in her breath, but it soon stopped. Aunt Eleanor took no notice for a little while, and then went on with affected petulance.

"Of course he must go and fight somewhere. None of our family would have their health if they were not fighting somebody. I am always fighting the Board of Guardians, or the farmers, or Deacon Macdingaway, or you, or Eddy, or some of you. The dear fellow who is gone fought at Waterloo and in India. It is all very well for his mother to say that it is ridiculous. *I* don't see it. He could make himself a rich man and a famous one by going to India, whereas he could do no possible good in regard to this lawsuit by staying here. *I* think it the best thing."

"The lawsuit," said Ethel. What lawsuit?"

"Law, child, they are going to dispute his succession, or something of that sort; but *I'll* sort 'em. That deceitful old Trot!"

"What deceitful old Trot?" asked Ethel, in wonder.

"Phyllis Myrtle. That woman has deceived every one, and now she has let it all out in her drink to Mrs. Gray. I am not going to talk one word more about the matter. Your brother Jimmy is coming home to pass his examination for the army, at Chelsea Hospital of all places, as if he was a wooden-legged pensioner, given to drink and language. I suppose you will say that you didn't know that next?"

"Indeed, I did not, Miss Evans."

"I knew she would," said Aunt Eleanor, with scornful triumph. "The next thing she will say is that she does not know that Roland is coming here to this house, this very night, to dine and sleep, and to say good-bye to us all—that will be the next thing she will say; mark my words."

"Indeed it will, Miss Evans," said Ethel.

"I knew it," said Aunt Eleanor. "I knew she would say that. However, child, it is true, and as it is too late for you to go home, you had better stay and make the best of it."

And now, for the first time, Aunt Eleanor looked at Ethel, and discovered that Ethel had turned, and was looking very steadily at her without speaking.

"Yes," said Aunt Eleanor, quite coolly, "you are perfectly correct in your supposition. I arranged this meeting here to-night, and so you may keep your eyes to yourself, child. I thought proper to do so, and I did it: I never give any further reasons for my conduct than that. I first of all communicated with Jimmy to know when he was coming, and I got him to promise to be here to-night. Then I sent and ordered Eddy home; in fact, he is at his father's house now. Then I ordered your brother John to step across; and lastly I sent

Mr. Somes, a young man about thirty, with long whiskers, looking very much like a cavalry officer without moustaches, fixed his shrewd bold eye on Roland's at once, and begged Roland to tell him what he thought of the matter.

Roland gave him the news which has been stated above, and added, "*I* think very seriously of this business."

Mr. Somes nodded. "Do you know anything of this young Perkin Warbeck?" he added.

"I only know that he is a young man of the very highest character," said Roland. "He is a great friend of my brother's. He is, I believe, admirable in every relation of life. I know enough of him to say that if he did not fully believe in his own claim, all the tortures of the Inquisition would not have made him advance it."

"It is an ugly business, Mr. Roland," said Mr. Somes. "It may go well with us, and it may go ill. I feel it my duty to tell you so. What are his proofs?"

"I have not the slightest idea," said Roland. "Mrs. Maynard knows something, and that is all I know about the matter."

"Mrs. Maynard of the Barton? Yes, a client of ours. We have half Shropshire for our clients in consequence of our Shrewsbury connection, you know. The mother of the future Mrs. Evans," he added, smiling and bowing.

"Why, no, Mr. Somes," said Ronald; "that is off; and a good thing too, for I am going to India."

Somes showed no astonishment, He wanted to know something more.

"We will hear about India another time, Mr. Evans. So Mrs. Maynard is one of his witnesses, and there's nothing between you and Miss Maynard? I suppose there is another gentleman in the field, handsomer than you are, though we Shropshire people used to consider you not bad-looking?"

"I believe, Somes, that poor Jasper Meredith is *au mieux* there. But what does it matter to me now?"

Somes gave a sudden start, but Roland did not notice it. Very shortly after Roland went away, and young Somes, filling himself some claret, took a letter from his pocket-book and read as follows:—

"Bonn.

"DEAR SOMES,—I have made such a thundering ass of myself, and have not a soul to advise me. I am coming at once to England.

"I have so far committed myself in writing to Miss Maynard, that her mother makes her write to me every day, and writes herself three times a-week, calling me by my Christian name; what on *earth* shall I do?

"I have no one to advise with but you. You have always been as much of a friend as a man of businesss. Do advise me, &c.

"JASPER MEREDITH."

CHAPTER XXVII.

ETHEL was more than ever with Miss Evans in these times; and these two got more and more attached to one another. Ethel, watching her friend, saw that she was more and more distraught and anxious as time went on.

"I am going to have Eddy home," she said one morning, abruptly. "He must do something for himself, for goodness knows how many I may have on my hands soon; and the army is not so expensive as Oxford, and so he had better be seen after. Ho! I suppose you know that Roland has got his commission, and passed his examination easily."

Ethel was very much surprised.

"Ah! you may well stare, indeed. A nice mess *we* have made of it among

us. I am sure I don't know whatever we shall do. I suppose you have not heard that Sir Jasper Meredith is engaged to Mary Maynard?"

"Impossible!" cried Ethel.

"True, young lady, for all that. Mrs. Maynard announces it everywhere, most openly. Well," she continued, rubbing her nose, "I am sorry for the little cripple, but it has saved our Roland, at all events. *Now*, perhaps, he will believe people when they tell him. I don't myself know what the man's intellect is made of, not to see through such a woman as *that*. In some senses he had better go where he is going: he leaves no fool behind to watch his interests."

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for Roland. And so they will all be here to dinner; and I am going to scold the cook and spoil the dinner for a quarter of an hour, and then I am going to dress. If you say a word, I will be civil to you. Go." And Ethel went without a word, and there was silence in the house.

Not for long. A wild storm, which had been for some time progressing towards Pulverbatch Grange, now broke open the door, and held high riot in her peaceful hall. Aunt Eleanor heard it as she was putting on her brooch; and as she listened, her face grew fixed and worn-looking. And she did a strange thing.

She knelt down at her dressing-table and prayed,—prayed earnestly, until the first passionate spirit of her prayer had gone by the mere iteration of the words. Then, like a good Christian, she rose from her knees, strengthened, resigned, but perfectly self-possessed and determined; and with her head in the air, went down the staircase, saying, "My bonny boys!"

Her bonny boys were misconducting themselves in the most outrageous manner. Jim Mordaunt had gone straight to Stretton Castle, and had driven over with Roland and Eddy in a dog-cart. They had arranged that Roland should sit behind with the groom, and that Eddy should drive, to which James had agreed with a calmness which to Roland foreboded disaster. He had proposed to drive, but was at once objurgated by Eddy and James, as departing from his given word; and so they had departed, Eddy driving. But in the first dangerous lane, Jim Mordaunt discovered that *he* wanted to drive, and fought Eddy for the reins. Eddy resisted, and Roland found it necessary to interfere mildly, and to send the groom, who was convulsed with laughter, to the plunging horse's head. After long recriminations, James was allowed to drive, and made the horse run away (fictitiously) in the darkest of dark places; and by scientific handling of his whip, knocked Eddy's hat off, and pretended that he could not pull his horse up to recover it. Petruchio at his maddest was not so mad as James was that night; and so when Aunt Eleanor came softly stepping down the staircase, with her candle glittering on her diamonds, she found Eddy with his curls in disorder, and the rain-drops glittering upon them, scolding James and appealing to Roland; James sedately exculpating himself, representing the whole matter as an unavoidable accident; and Roland standing by laughing, and saying at intervals, "You fools! you fools!"

They did not see her till she said, "Well, young men, have you been having some fun?"

Their good-humoured, kindly riot was stilled in an instant as they came towards her. She was a strange lady this, yet one who could give a reason for her actions, too. She passed Eddy and Roland, and going straight to James Mordaunt, and kissing him on the forehead, whispered to him, "God bless you, my boy: you are not the first, and you won't be the last." And then leaving him suddenly, she shook hands with Roland, looking at him steadily. After this she turned to Eddy and said, "Where is your hat, sir?"

"*He* knocked it off on purpose," said Eddy.

"Why, bless the boy, his hair is all wet," said Aunt Eleanor, making an excuse to pass her hand over the curls of this "carum caput." "Go and dry it, sir, up-stairs. No, don't; you will not hurt. Come into the parlour."

But as they were going, the door was opened by one of the men, and a gruff voice asked, "Is my brother here?" And James went back; for it was his brother, and they made their greeting alone.

"How goes it, Jimmy?" said the elder.

"No better, old man," said the younger.

"That's bad, old chap," said the elder. "Keep a light heart, and you'll soon forget it. By-the-by, the bay mare has come down with Tom, in Donnington Lane, and is knocked all to bits. I always said she was too straight in the shoulder. The Governor must have squinted when he bought her. Is Ethel here?"

"No, Johnny. Why?"

"Because she ain't at home, that is all. I suppose she is somewhere." And so they went into that room which Miss Evans was pleased to call her parlour.

The dinner-table was laid at the lower end, and they clustered round the great fireplace at the upper or drawing-room end, and talked pleasantly and quietly together. There was no more noise now; the last sparkle of the old fun was over. A great parting was coming, and the shadow of it was upon them.

Aunt Eleanor made Roland come and sit beside her, and as she talked to him about his resolution of going to India, and of this wonderful lawsuit, she not only managed to turn himself and herself away from the fire towards the door at the lower end of the long room, but also, in the heat of her assurance that she would manage for his interests in the best way, contrived to get hold of his hand. As she held it, the door opened, and some one came in with a candle in her hand, throwing the light upon her face. At which time Aunt Eleanor found herself clasped tightly on the wrist by Roland; and said, very quietly—

"You might have found *that* out before. You may well pinch me black and blue, indeed. Yes, indeed, you may well. I won't scold you because you are going to India. But if you ever have time to think, think what a fool you have been over that matter."

"Is it too late, aunt."

"Why, you don't suppose, do you, that such a girl as that is likely to allow herself to be played fast and loose with, as you have played fast and loose with her; and to be insulted by a chit of a Mary Maynard as you have insulted her; and to be 'Etheled' as you have 'Etheled' her; and then listen to a word you have got to say without—without—boxing your stupid ears. You don't suppose *that* do you. I don't. Look at her."

And, indeed, she was well worth looking at, holding her brother James' shoulders, and looking into his eyes with gentle, tender curiosity: for Ethel was as well worth looking at as any young lady in the good county of Shropshire that day.

"Roland," she said, stepping forward and smiling on him, "and so you are going to India: mercy on us, how lonely we shall all be, and how the times will have changed! I shall stay with Miss Evans altogether, if she will have me now."

She was quite self-possessed, much more so than was he; and as he sat beside her, and talked to her all that evening, he thought more and more what a fool he had been.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ROLAND had been in bed some three hours, when he was awakened in the dead of night by a horse's hoofs on the gravel; and while he was still lying wondering, a servant entered half-dressed, with a light, and put a telegram in his hand.

"The Colonel of the 160th Dragoons to Cornet Evans:—You will instantly join head-quarters, and make every preparation for sailing at once, Cornet Marlow having met with a severe accident. No delay can be permitted."

His first astonishment over, he bade the servant dress himself and help pack, while he went off to rouse Eddy. Eddy at once determined to go with him, and see the very last of him, and they spent the night in packing, having determined only to tell their mother what had happened in the morning, and then only half the truth.

It was very strange, moving about the darkened house with lights in the dead of night, and coming, under such strange circumstances, on old familiar objects, now to be parted from perhaps for ever. This had been his only home, and yet he parted with it almost without a sigh, as he parted with servant, horse, dog, almost all. The fire of life was burning high and clear with him; there was no present and no past for him, only a glorious future.

The parting from his mother was not difficult, for indeed he told her only that he was summoned to the head-quarters of his regiment. Not another soul save the servants did he see, but had driven off in the carriage long before any of the Mordaunts were astir. He looked across the valley at their house in the fresh morning air, and the house was closed, and no smoke was coming from the chimneys. Much was to pass before he saw them again.

He was very silent, but very gentle and kind in the train. During the whole of the long day's journey to Chatham, he talked only in a wondering, eager way about the future: where they would send him; how he should get his necessaries together in so short a time, and how delightful it would be. The moment they got to Chatham, he reported himself to the Colonel, who seemed pleased at his diligence, and complimented him.

The Colonel looked at Roland with intense curiosity as he did so, and Roland looked intently on the Colonel. He was a tall, long man, with a lean, brown face, and two bright, hazel eyes looking out from under grizzled eyebrows: also a pair of grizzled moustaches, not curled, which scarcely concealed the determined pout of the lower lip. A very pleasant-looking man when in good humour, as he was now. His name, Colonel Cordery.

"I hear all kinds of fine things of you, sir. I hope you will like us. We have the name of being one of the most agreeable regiments in the army. If you will fit in with us, we shall fit in with you. We are a little old-fashioned and quiet, and you will find it dull after Oxford, I fear; but we have not got a single snob in the regiment, which is a great thing."

"You are very fortunate, sir," said Roland, by way of saying something.

"It is more good management than good fortune, though," said the Colonel, thoughtfully. "You see, we have a way of getting rid of snobs; we all get so thundering polite and *genteel* (not gentlemanlike, we are always that) that they can't stand us, and exchange. That is the way we manage. We are rather surprised at your joining our regiment. I should have thought that you would at least have tried for the Engineers, or missing that, the Artillery. However, I have such a letter from Lord A—— about you, that you will be one of us at once. You will find us not very high in literary acquirements; we *could* all construe our Cæsar's Commentaries, but not many can do so now. But you will find this a regiment which knows its duty. You will find the officers personally knowing the men, and the men respecting the officers. How strange that a man with your prospects should become a dragoon. Well! that is no business of mine. You will find us good fellows, ready to welcome you heartily."

"I fear I shall have short time to learn my duty, sir," said Roland.

"We will teach it you, theoretically, on board ship, as they do musketry at Hythe—never allow a man powder and ball till he is a perfect shot. Ha! ha! A man whose father has kept hounds, and who has himself got a first in Moderations at Oxford need not fear cavalry drill. You will come to mess to-night?"

"Certainly, sir. I will step round and tell my brother, and dress."

"Bring your brother. And look here—you have five days' leave; you must go back to London for your outfit; who are your agents?"

"Cox and Greenwood, I believe, sir."

"Well, they will see to you. I will introduce you to-night. Go along and dress."

In a short time the men began to dawdle into the mess-room one by one, and to talk shop to one another. And if you hear the officers of any regiment talking about their duty, get your son into that regiment, by hook or by crook, for it is a good one. The Colonel and his boy (the Colonel was a widower), and the boy was in the Engineers, doing well, came in; and the Colonel sat down before the fire, very thoughtfully; and discovering his sword, took it off and put it in the coal-scuttle, from which it was dexterously removed by a subaltern. The Colonel was in a brown study, and the other men talked low.

At last he said, spreading his hands abroad, before the fire, "Well! well! he knows his own affairs best; but it is a most astonishing thing to me."

Those round him understood him at once. One of them said, "Will the new Cornet do, Colonel?"

"Oh yes, he'll do fast enough. But why on earth did the Minister and the Horse Guards and Lord A—— send him to *us*."

"Because," said his son, "they knew, all three of them, that my father's regiment was the best-governed and best-ordered regiment in the service."

"Well, it is a good regiment. Hush! Here they are; he and his brother," and he rose.

The mess had got it into their heads that they should see a pale, bent man, over-worn by studies, and a pasty-faced youth from Oxford—his brother. Soldiers can judge of men, and they were taken by surprise.

Again, among men who have undergone a certain class-training, there is an unwritten law by which one gentleman can often recognize another at first sight. The first sight is very often wrong. One may find a finished gentleman in training and in heart, under the disguise of an outward-looking cad, and you may find a thorough-going cad under the disguise of a gentleman. But, with regard to Roland and Eddy, there was no mistake; and once more they were taken by surprise Their experience of Oxford men had not been uniformly happy—in fact otherwise; but here were, at first sight, two *traditional* Oxford men.

Roland came in first—grand, imperial, perfectly cool, and perfectly conciliatory—in height reaching the Colonel, in personal appearance far surpassing any man in the room. The unspoken verdict on him was, "He will do." And as Aunt Eleanor might have said—"I should think he would." He met with a warm and genial reception from this jolly regiment, and was from the first moment a success.

But by no means such a success as Eddy. Eddy came in with his great eyes staring, and his mouth slightly parted in sheer curiosity. He was introduced to one and to the other, and he made the requisite bow; but the look of whimsical curiosity was still in his face, when Roland, the Colonel, and the Adjutant were deep in confabulation, and when most gathered of the junior officers had round him.

For Aunt Eleanor was right. There

was something singularly attractive about this lad. The poor boy had a way of looking very handsome when he admired anything, and of not throwing any expression into his face when he was disgusted at anything. He was admiring now, and they gathered round him. Also he was pleasantly ready with his tongue. Lieutenant Spiller began the conversation.

"Are you going into the army, Mr. Evans?"

"Yes," said Eddy; "but into the infantry. You see, my aunt is afraid of my falling into dissipated ways if I join the cavalry. Now, does your experience bear her out, for instance?"

"Certainly not in this regiment," said Spiller, laughing; "but your aunt is in the main right."

"She generally is," said Eddy. "I wish you could make a vacancy for me; I should like to go with Roland."

"Marlow only made the vacancy for him by breaking his leg in two places," said Captain Markham.

"Then I must decline in the infantry," said Eddy, and they all went to dinner.

There was contention about Eddy. Roland was made to sit by the Colonel to be talked to, but with regard to Eddy there was contention. "Come here, Evans," said one. "His place is here," said another. Eddy was perfectly cool. He said, "I will sit where you like, for you all seem very nice. Don't spoil me for the infantry, that is all; I am not used to be spoilt at home."

The dinner was plain, but eaten with a good appetite. They had all been hard at work that morning. Roland and the Colonel talked much together, and when warmed with his meat and drink (in moderation) the Colonel, like an honest man, grew confidential.

"To tell you the very real truth, Evans," he said, "I was not best pleased at your coming here at all at first."

"I am sorry for that, sir; I will try to remove your causes of objection."

"They are removed already, I think. We don't, as a rule, want scholars in our regiment; they are apt to be bumptious, and we can't stand bumptious men. Now you don't seem in the least degree bumptious."

"I assure you I am not, sir."

"No! no! Quite so. I dare say you will do us a deal of good; freshen us up a bit, hey? I suppose you read the *Saturday Review* now?"

Roland confessed he did.

"Beastly paper, but very clever, is it not?"

Roland said that at the University it was considered able.

"Yes, you are very rich, are you not?"

Roland said, "I *ought* to have some six or seven thousand a year."

"Are you extravagant?"

"No, quite otherwise," said Roland.

"Because I want to point this out to you.—You are by very far the richest man in this regiment, and we are the quietest and cheapest cavalry regiment in the service. Consider, Evans, what a wicked thing you would do were you to bring on habits of competitive ostentation in our pleasant little family. We are not Solomons; I have fools under me, who, poor boys, would resent your ostentation, and hate you for it in the first instance, and then try to emulate it—to their ruin, aye, and to the ruin of the regiment. We are a happy little family, Evans; don't you make it an unhappy one by idleness and extravagance.

"Before heaven, sir," said Roland, "I only desire to learn my duty from you."

The major, a lean man, with a hungry face, pinched in sharply under

the cheek bones, and wandering, speculative eyes, here answered.

"The young man has spoken well. Works are well. What is your faith?"

"My dear Brocklebank," said the Colonel, "is not this rather too soon?"

Major Brocklebank never noticed him. "Have you gone through the fire of ill-concealed Papistry at Oxford, young man, and have you come out without a scorch? It is impossible. I fear you are a high-churchman."

"I am very much afraid I was what you would call a high-churchman," said Roland, rather frightened at having to confess his faith in strange company, but perfectly resolute. "And I am afraid—I mean I hope—I mean I intend to remain as much of one as I can. And since this confession has been forced upon me, I may as well tell the whole truth at once, and say that in politics I am an extreme Radical."

"Come out and see the men, Evans," said the Colonel. And Roland rose and went after him, pleased and proud at being commanded by a better man than himself. When he got into the barrack-square, under the clouded moon, he discovered that the Colonel was convulsed with laughter.

"Old Brocklebank and you!" he said, when he found his voice. "Why, old Brocklebank is a Dissenter and a Radical, and you are a Puseyite and a Radical. We shall have some fun out of you two. Only mind, Evans," he said, seriously, "Don't, by your superior scholarship, make Brocklebank ridiculous. He has proved himself a very splendid officer; you have still to prove yourself that. And he has done more to purify our mess from loose talk than ever I did. They *daren't* before him. Come and see your men."

"I thought a cavalry regiment was very different from this, sir?" said Roland.

"There is no regiment like ours, sir," said the Colonel. "Brocklebank and I have made it what it is. By heaven, sir, I wish you could have seen it before our time. Well."

They walked in silence for a few moments, and the Colonel said, "Will you see your men first, or your horses?"

And Roland said, "The men."

"I am glad of that. What I want to impress on my subalterns is that they should know their men and should gain their confidence. We will see your troop, No. 2. Pause for a moment, Evans, before you look at these men and boys, and think."

"Give the key-note," said Roland.

"I will. These men whom you are about to see will, sooner or later, be given into your charge for life or death, for good or evil. They are ill-educated; they are recruited from the very worst class; not one of them but recruited under a cloud of debt, of despair, or of ruined love for woman; or possibly worse. Now, mind, sooner or later there will come a dim, dark hour for you and for them—an hour of disaster and retreat. And in that hour, Evans, they will cry to you for brains, for dexterity, for courage, for conduct, knowing that their lives are in your hand. Are you prepared for this responsibility? We cannot supplement our battalions by conscription, like the Continental nations. Will you undertake the government of these few?"

"I will try to learn from you, sir," said Roland, for this evening was different from what he had expected; and, indeed, seeing that the darkest of dark hours was approaching, it was not at all unnatural.

The Colonel opened a door and passed in, Roland following him.

It was a long, low barrack-room, with beds, now turned down on each side, and tables along the midst. There were about forty men in the room.

The most of them had not gone to bed, but some had, for it was getting late, and as they were to sail so soon, discipline was a little relaxed. Every man rose when he saw the Colonel, and the Colonel bade them sit down again.

They were sitting in their shirts and trousers, playing at draughts, at chess, at cards, mainly "all fours," along the centre tables. They knew the Colonel's humour, and went on with their games as though he were not present. Round each *parti* of chess, cards, or draughts, there were many lookers-on, noisy enough before the Colonel had come in, but silent now.

"These are your fellows," said the Colonel, in a whisper; look at them." And Roland did so.

Sleepy? yes. Thoughtless? yes. Largely curious about the Colonel's visit? yes. Utterly uncurious about him, Roland? yes again. Strange lads! many of them handsome, many ugly; but not a hopeless oarsman among them, so Roland put it. Sleepy and idle, yet looking, by some bright trick of the eye, indescribable, as though they could row, if taught; or, indeed, fight on occasion.

"I only came here to-night, men," said the Colonel, raising his voice, "to introduce your new Cornet to you. Cornet Marlow, being invalided, he will go with you to Calcutta, you know."

Every eye was turned on Roland. One young man sat up in bed, and kicked another young man in the next bed, who would not wake; whereupon the other young man groped under the bed for his boots to shy at the first young man; and was proceeding, with expletives, to ask whether eight hours stable-guard was not enough, when he was stiffened by the sight of the Colonel, and went fast asleep. For bed is a sanctuary which is utterly inviolable in free countries against all powers.

"These men are in bed before bugle," said the Colonel to a Corporal.

"They have been at work on board all day, sir," said the Corporal.

"What men are in the sick-ward?" said the Colonel.

"Only one, Job Hartop."

"You have seen your men in health, Evans; come with me and see another side of it."

Job Hartop was in an ill case; in fact, the world was over and past for Job Hartop. The surgeon was there, and said that the depression brought on by chronic inflammation of the lungs was so great that he could not rally. The nurse was there, and she said that he was sinking fast, and would rattle soon: the chaplain was there, and said that his spiritual state was satisfactory, but that there was something on his mind. The chaplain added that he was going to give him the Communion. Would they stay?"

Roland said "Yes," directly. The Colonel said a few words about preparation, but added, "We may have short shrift, some of us, one day. I will stay too."

They spoke in whispers, as we do when one is dying. The priest made ready the elements, and then they aroused the dying lad, who had been laid, with his face deep in his pillow, turned away from them.

Such a strange, beautiful flushed face turned towards them. You would scarcely have believed at first that death was there; but when you looked at the parted lips, with the dry white tongue behind them, you saw *him*. The battle could not last much longer.

The Colonel put the chaplain aside for a moment. "Hartop," he said, "you are near your end, and we are going to take the Sacrament together; is there anything I can do for you?"

The lad said, "No, sir, I thank you kindly."

"Is there no message to your relations,—to father, or to mother?"

"No, sir, thank you. They are well shute of me."

"Is there no message to any one else now, dearer than either father or mother?" said the Colonel, quietly.

The young man paused, and then said, slowly—

"Yes. Her name is here, in this letter, under the pillow. And I want her to be told this. If I'd ever thought she cared for me, I'd never have gone after the other girl. But I didn't see it. And I never cared for the other one. And the other one, her mother wouldn't let her have me, and so I 'listed and come to this. I should like her to be told that, sir, if it could be managed. Who is that young gentleman?"

"That is Mr. Roland Evans, our new Cornet."

"Perhaps he will take that message for one of his own troop," said the dying man. "Stick to your troop, sir, and your troop will stick to you. What was that song that daft Geordie Cameron used to sing, the time we were quartered with the 72nd at Carlisle?"

"Never mind songs now, my poor lad," said the Colonel.

"Aye, but—but I do mind. I am giving the young gentleman the message to take to her. I know."

"'Won't you come back to me, Douglas, Douglas?'"

"No!"

"'And I'll lay my heart on your dead heart, Douglas.'"

"That's near it, but not all."

"'Mine eyes were blinded, your words were few.'"

"That is it! That is the message, Cornet. Now shrive me, and let me die."

And the chaplain began the Communion Service, and they all partook. And the young man had eaten the bread and drank the wine, but when the chaplain, experienced in all kinds of death on many fields, came to the passage, "Glory be to God in the highest," he substituted another, "O Lord, receive the soul of this Thy servant;" and the Colonel and Roland, looking on the bed, saw that the young man was dead.

Such was Roland's first introduction to this strange little British army, which has to hold the world on its back like the tortoise. When they were out in the square together, he asked the Colonel, "Who was he?"

"I have no idea," said the Colonel. "He was one of those young men who come to us from no one knows whither; for what no one knows why; and make our best soldiers for particular purposes."

"For what purposes," said Roland.

"For desperate purposes," said the Colonel. "That stamp of man is utterly careless of life. There is one day in my life I do not care to speak about—the day of Chillianwallah. And on that day I saw hope if we could get a message across to B——, under heavy fire. And I sent a trooper, a gentleman, a man with a secret, with it. But he was cut over, and his secret with him. George Peyt wasted two years before he took the title of Lord Avonswood, and Lady Flora Barty has turned Roman Catholic. That is all *I* have heard, and I don't believe one word of it."

"Then in cavalry regiments you have your romances," said Roland.

"Lord bless you," said the Colonel. "Why did *you* give up your career for us?"

This was dangerous ground.

"What do you suppose makes young men enlist then, Colonel?"

"Women, women, women," said the Colonel, emphatically. "If the women will only make such fools of themselves as they generally do, we can recruit the British army without a conscription. Why, the British army would never have had *my* services, but for that very cause. Nor yours either, my good lad."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Roland

"And I beg yours also. Don't tell me. Ho, by the way, I should have told you. You are not junior Cornet. There is actually one who knows less about his duty than you do. I only knew it to-day."

"He must be rather inexperienced," said Roland.

"Well," said the Colonel, "he has been studying in Germany; and I dare say knows German tactics. I don't say that he is a bad man, because, if he were, he would not have been sent to me. But I hate jobbery."

"Yes, sir."

"And this is a thundering piece of jobbery. The worst I have ever heard of, or dreamt of. I am not going into details. I am no reformer; I believe we could get on pretty well as we are, if they would let us alone. But this is too strong."

"Indeed, sir."

"Yes, and indeed," said the Colonel. "Markham's aunt is dead, and Markham naturally don't want to go to India; so he sells out. And lo and behold, a schoolboy is gazetted to us—I assure you, a mere schoolboy—from sheer political interest. *I* was never spoken to about the matter. I only was officially informed of the fact. They may do such things now, but they won't do them ten years hence. It is shameful. Bully him, Evans. I know he must be a Turk."

"Has he passed Chelsea, sir?"

"Oh yes, he is one of your kind, a scholar; I believe that he is a University man. The whole job has been done in a fortnight; it appears that no regiment but ours would do for him, and his father is a considerable man in his county, and so the bear is sent to us to be licked into shape.

"What is his name, sir?"

"James Mordaunt," said the Colonel.

"That bear wants no licking, Colonel. Jim has followed me."

"You know him, then?"

"Yes, sir. I know one of the finest fellows who ever walked—in his way—in your way; by Jove, sir, you have strengthened the regiment by ten men."

"And who is the lady in this case?" said the Colonel.

"I fear it is my sister," said Roland, quite off his guard. In a moment afterwards, he was praying the Colonel to forget, not to have heard, to ignore, his last speech. And the Colonel said, quietly, "My dear young man I am the best Colonel of cavalry, socially speaking, in the army. Is it likely that I could say one word?"

Yes, Jim, by simple sulky ferocity, and threats of (as he put it) making a greater beast of himself than he had ever done before; and what was more powerful still, by threatening to enlist in Roland's troop, had carried the day; and if ever one man was backed up by another, he was backed up by Sir Jasper Meredith.

Squire Mordaunt didn't see his way, so he said. He did not like to ask the Minister. It was an unusual and singular thing. It would be a sheer job; and if he wanted anything afterwards he should be ashamed to ask it of the Whigs. Sir Jasper screeched and hobbled round him for an hour.

"What is the good of talking like that," he asked, shrilly (Aunt Eleanor once said that he was Pope without his powers of versification). "You have ratted, my dear sir; for heaven's sake take your money like an honest man. You can't possibly rat again, you know, under five or six years; and you may be dead before then, for you are ageing fast. Realize your rat while they remember it, and provide for Jim."

"Don't be impudent Jasper," said Squire Mordaunt, "you have an ugly tongue: keep it between your teeth, boy. If you call providing for Jim putting him in a cavalry regiment, I don't."

"Then keep him at home," cried

Sir Jasper, not one whit abashed; "keep him at home in idleness and sulkiness, away from Mr. Roland, and the Lord help you."

"It is no business of yours," said Squire Mordaunt.

"Not a bit," said Sir Jasper, "that is the point of it. If it was any business of mine, I should take a side. As it is, I take none; but I know and can see things which you can't. If you send him with Roland he will do. If you don't, take the consequences."

"And if he gets killed there," said Squire Mordaunt, at a loss for an argument—

"Then you will have no further trouble with him," said Sir Jasper; "which would be a relief to *my* mind if *I* was his father."

CHAPTER XXIX.

ROLAND, assisted by Eddy, rather enjoyed himself for the next five days; nay, I suspect enjoyed himself very much indeed. Cox and Greenwood's people had the dressing of him; and loving their art, as artists should, gave up their souls to the decoration of the handsomest young officer they had had in hand for a long time. Their trade is one which rises into an art; and they carefully decorated Roland for the feast of vultures.

Nature directed them, I suppose. Game cocks only fight in their grandest plumage. War and marriage must be done in fine clothes, by all accounts. And Roland kept posturing about before cheval glasses, as his fripperies were tried on; rather wished, once or twice, that Ethel could have seen him. Thus, one thing suggests the other, and *vice versâ*. One can go no further in one's simile.

But Roland, in trying on his gaudy trappings, found out something of which he was not aware. He vilipended some of the most (as it seemed to him) ridiculous extravagances of his uniform. His horse's trappings were laced with money cowries. "How ridiculous is this," said Roland to the tailor, "this is barbarous nonsense."

The tailor brought him his best sword, and put a horse's head-piece on a block. "Will you be kind enough, sir, to see if you can cut down to the leather through those cowries." And Roland declined, laughing, for he looked at the cowries, and looked at the sword, and came to the conclusion that the pure silica of the cowries would beat the sword. "I never saw *that* before," he said. "I thought there was no meaning in it. I suppose you will tell me next that there is a reason for my wearing a cascade of crimson horse-hair down my back." And as he said so, he put on his helmet and postured before the glass.

"There is a very good reason for that, sir," said the little tailor.

"You would find a reason for anything," said Roland.

"Well, sir," said the tailor, "allow me to put on your helmet; you take your sword and slash away at the back of my neck through that horse-hair. *I* am game."

"Well, I never thought of *that*," said Roland.

"You ain't in the army tailoring, you see, sir. Sir, what the outsiders call gewgaw and fripperies, all have a meaning and an intention. Our army is an old one, and has not been badly managed on the whole. Our army, you see, sir, we having no conscription, has always been a small one, over-matched and over-worked. Consequently, our army has developed the greatest defensive powers of any. And our officers are rich and extravagant. Consequently they have ornamented their defences. But there ain't a gewgaw or a button in the British army which don't tell of some old fight when the thing was found to be necessary. Some are obsolete, some have run into sheer

gawdry. But they all mean something. The extra hussar jacket for instance, defends the rein-arm, leaving the sword-arm free. That ain't obsolete yet, sir."

"I never saw this before," said Roland; "but with these new rifled muskets cavalry will become obsolete altogether."

"Well, sir," said the tailor, "these arms of precision will for a time play the devil with the cavalry tailors; but you will always require cavalry for pursuit, sir, and we must revert to old ideas."

"As how then?" asked Roland.

"Armour, sir: aluminium. The specific gravity is small; in hardness it can nearly compare with rhodium, and it dresses up very nice indeed with scarlet and gold, or with blue and silver. Here, for instance, sir, is a cuirass of the 'Cent Gardes;' you may hang it on your little finger. Our house is prepared to go into aluminium to any extent, if we only knew which way the Horse Guards were going to move in the way of cavalry. A gentleman with your strong parliamentary interest, three seats, dear me, so they say, might tell us what they were going to do. And I am sure we should be grateful. That was a sudden thing, sir, your poor pa's death."

"It was sudden," said Roland.

"And you going to India, too, so soon," said the tailor; "without even the will proved; so some say. If you happened to want any cash, sir, our house is in the habit of advancing cash to young gentlemen of your expectations. Our terms are five per cent, and we would sooner take your interest than another's."

Roland, in his gawdries, turned from the glass, and said—

"My father dealt with your house for many years, and he always said that they had treated him well: I mean in a friendly way. He always spoke affectionately about you. Now I tell you point-blank that I am not in a position to borrow money. There is law in our house, and Lord only knows where law may end. My Aunt Eleanor will pay for this outfit. Beyond that I can guarantee you nothing."

"Lord bless you, sir," said the little man, "you mean about the disputed succession. All humbug from beginning to end. The plot of two foolish old women. *We* know, sir. We haven't been your father's bankers for so long as not to know his affairs. Our opinion is expressed, too, when I tell you that you can draw on us for any amount you choose. Though why not stay in England and fight it out, *I* can't see."

"I am sick of England," said Roland.

"Quite so, sir. Many are. *I* am. But Miss Evans will see it through for you better than you could yourself. We have a deal of these sort of matters on our hands. I don't know what would become of our trade if it wasn't for the young ladies not knowing their own minds. Well, sir, they think the better of you for it, which is a comfort. Here is your young lady's brother in the shop at this moment."

"What young lady's brother?" said Roland, aghast.

"Mrs. Mordaunt's brother," said the little tailor, "Mr. James Mordaunt; Cornet Mordaunt. May he come in? He has been cross about his tunic, and wants to see it on in the glass."

Roland called out: "Jim, come in here;" and added also: "Go out, and leave us alone," which the army tailor did.

Roland was grand, in full cavalry uniform; James was only dressed in ordinary clothes. Still it would have been difficult to say which was the grander out of the pair. They both had that knack of carrying their heads erect, and neither of them was

sentimental, though each had a deal of sentiment to dispose of.

The relations between these two young men were as deeply sentimental as ever were those between Frenchmen or Germans. They knew that there was a sort of sentimental love between them; Roland had found out that he was in love with Ethel; and James, poor boy, knew too well that he was in love with Mildred. But they were both ashamed of it; and met like mutually convicted vagabonds. There was no "effusion" in their meeting.

"Well, young Mordaunt," said Roland, "what do you think of this?" meaning his (Roland's) personal appearance in his cavalry uniform.

"I shall be quite as fine as you, old Evans," said James, "when I get my clothes. Are you cross with me?"

"No, I am not cross with you. No, I don't know that I am cross with you. Stay, Jim, don't let us be fools. I am so very glad that you are going with us. I wish you had been a hundred miles off, old chap, but I am glad you are coming with us."

"Why do *you* taunt me. I have done no wrong."

"Nor I," said Roland. "Come Jim, let us be friends, and go through it all together. It might have been otherwise, but it was not to be. Let you and I tackle to this regiment, and do our best."

"I never wavered in my loyalty to you, since you saved my life," said Jim. "Tell me what to do, and I will do it. I am brave, strong, and affectionate, but I am a fool; you must tell me, and I will do it."

"We will go hand in hand, my boy," said Roland. "There will only be you and I out of the whole boat together. The old four is now reduced to a pair. You must row bow to me."

It was their way of swearing everlasting friendship, unsentimental, but quite effectual. There was no more "tall talk" after this, until the very last.

"How do I look, James?" said Roland. "Am I fine? Are you frightened at me?"

"Not a bit," said James. "What would he the good of me if I was? I grant that, as a spectacle, you would be imposing on horseback. But I don't see the use of you. You seem to me to be purely ornamental. Let me fig out; I was always better-looking than you, and may play the *rôle* of a dismounted dragoon better than you."

So they figged *him* out; "but he did not look one whit better," said Roland; and at last, tired of posturing in armour which they had not proved, they walked away together arm in arm; and from that moment those two were never separated any more, neither in quarters, in march, or in the furious wild hurry of battle.

They walked round and they picked up Eddy, who was prepared with any amount of nonsense, which they let him talk as he would, feeling a little solemn themselves. Then they went to the play, and saw Charles Kean in the "Corsican Brothers," and Eddy, in his silly way, pretended that he was frightened. Then they had oysters and porter, and went soberly home, just as the boy Arbuthnot might have done before he sailed for the Crimea. Eton, Harrow, the plough-tail, the working bench; and then all the sudden fury of war. Such was the history of most young soldiers in those days.

On the morrow the three met again, and went to Chatham. The regiment was paraded, and Eddy saw Roland and James, on their new horses, all a-blaze with scarlet, blue, and gold, with gilt helmets, and cascades of crimson horse-hair falling down their backs — a great sight. They did not partake in the parade, but sat on their horses by the Colonel,

not yet knowing their places; but Eddy and others thought them the two finest young fellows in the whole regiment.

Motion of any kind was delightful to Eddy. The motion of the next two days was singularly delightful to him. The business of a great transport is always pleasant; surely that of a great cavalry transport is the most pleasant of all.

Eddy, awakening from late slumbers, found that Roland and James had been gone long before, and going down to where the ship lay, found them in neat undress uniforms, hard at the work which they had selected for themselves.

The ship lay by the wharf, and the horses were being *led* on board, not slung, the Adjutant superintending. Early as it was, our two lads seemed to have got themselves recognized as knowing, at least, some part of their work, for their voices were loud and their remarks were emphatic.

"That is an ugly, straight-shouldered brute," said Roland, to a farrier; "fifteen pounds and half a crown back."

"He'll go in a crowd, sir. Rear rank horse."

"Scarcely pay his passage," said Roland. "*Here's* another. Jim, look at this hammer-headed one."

"I'm looking at him," said Jim. And, indeed, so was every one else. He was a horse with a head like a carpenter's hammer; a horse with a shoulder back to his croup, well ribbed up, with splendid gaskins, long fetlocks, and enormous feet—a splendid cavalry horse, but with the temper of D'Estournel. This horse refused to go on board on any terms whatever.

No man could live near his heels—human existence was an impossibility in his rear, and a weariness in his van; for pull you never so hard on his halter, the beast would not move at all. There was a hammer-headed brutality about him which nothing could affect for an instant. The British army was puzzled.

"Put the bridle on him," cried Roland; and a trooper brought a bridle, and did so; the horse submitting in a way which astonished those who did not know his tactics. "Now, Jim," said Roland, "up you go!" and before any one had time to speak, Roland had given Jim a leg up, and Jim was sitting bare-backed on the dangerous brute. "Keep clear," said Roland, as he took the bridle, and began leading the horse towards the gangway.

The horse, finding a man on his back, began going, and went until he found the boards under his feet; then came the tug of war, and every one held his breath.

The fury of the brute came all of a sudden. For an instant he planted out his fore-feet, and was quiescent; then Roland said, "Heels, Jim!" and James rammed his heels in. For the next twenty-five seconds there was a struggle, which no one who saw it forgot. The brute reared, but Roland was hanging by his head, with both reins gripped under his chin; he kicked furiously, but James was on his back laughing. He backed until his heels were over the green sea-water, fifteen feet below, but he was kicked forward again by James; biting, squealing, striking with his fore-feet at Roland, he made a whole life of terror to the bystanders, over the slippery plank; but our two boys had him on deck before many had time to utter an interjection, and stood beside him laughing.

The Adjutant complimented them in very strong language, and the men admired them from that moment. Roland took no notice of the matter; James only said, "We have many Irish horses in Shropshire; I shall be delighted at any time to ride or break any horse which every one else is afraid of. But I am nothing to Evans."

"There is another ticklish subject there," said the Adjutant.

"I see," said James, "a nervous chestnut. Is that you, Eddy? I say, old man, ride that chestnut aboard for them."

Eddy, unnoticed till now, turned to a trooper, and said, "Leg up, please," and they put him on the fidgety chestnut, much admiring the pretty little plucky dandy.

"Horse! horse!" said Eddy, when he was on its back, "how can we be fond of you if you do these things? On you go, now. Come old man," he said, patting the horse's neck; "let us get aboard."

Trembling with terror, the kindly, timid brute went forward step by step. On the plank he paused, and there was the silence of sheer terror among the bystanders; but Eddy, by patting and gentle talk, got him over; and there was a cheer from the men.

"A fine little fellow," said the men. They saw him again in other circumstances.

It was noticeable that Roland and James, though asking the commonest questions about their duty, were recognized as first-rate officers by every rank. They were reckless and cool—they were proud and familiar. No man would have hesitated to ask a favour of either of them; and at the same time, no one would have dared to take a liberty. The men thought, that in the long dull garrison work in India, these two bold lads would stand their friends; and the officers thought that they would be good companions. They were appealed to already, in spite of their ignorance of duty. The officers had heard that they were men who could have done anything they chose at the University; and the men had heard, possibly through the gossip of the regimental servants, of their physical accomplishments, which reports they had now seen singularly confirmed. They had made a very good start with their regiment.

Both of them were lads who put their hand to anything which they found ready to it; and they worked hard at this shipment of horses for two days. At the end of that time they were all aboard, and Roland, Eddy, and James, were walking between deck, stroking the noses of such horses as would let them, and congratulating one another on the successful issue of their effort.

In the narrow passage left between the larboard and starboard horses' heads, the narrow passage amidship, there were only two young men on stable guard, who sat on deck, with their arms round their knees they were nobody at all, and so James; Mordaunt thought that there could be no harm in making a row with Eddy.

"Here is a horse with a pink nose," said Eddy; "they are all beasts, these pink-nosed horses. 'Pink nose, seedy toes.' That is rhyme and reason too."

"I don't think you know much about the matter," said James Mordaunt.

"Well, I never knew a horse with a pink nose that could keep his shoes on," said Eddy. "And no more did you. I know as much about horses as you do."

"That is very possible," said James, "but you bring in your little sciolisms in such an offensive manner that it is difficult to avoid thrashing you: so difficult that I cannot avoid it. In fact I am going to do it now."

"James, my dear James, remember where you are," said Roland.

"I will not be always lectured by you," said James. "Edward, come here."

Edward not coming, James fell suddenly on him, and they fell over the stable guard, who was intensely amused and delighted by the whole proceeding. Roland interfered, saying, "James, do remember the men,

and the fact that you hold Her Majesty's commission. For heaven's sake don't play the fool like this."

Eddy meanwhile, finding James too strong for him, had got loose, ran up the companion stairs, and nearly brought down some one who was descending by the run. After a few defiances and challenges to James, he went on deck, without seeing for a moment who it was he had so nearly knocked down.

Allan Gray, unused to shipboard, descended clumsily. He had been in many queer places, but this was the very oddest. A long, well-lighted passage, with rows of horses' heads on each side. Confronting him were two young men, one of whom he hated, the other of whom he dreaded and respected.

James Mordaunt he hated with his whole heart. Worthless, empty, frivolous, cruel, were the best words Dissenter and Radical had for *him*. With Roland it was far otherwise. He respected and dreaded Roland. He had wit enough to see that Roland had not only ten times his brains, but had had ten times his education, and had made use of it. And Roland was behaving so strangely and so recklessly, that he was persuaded that Roland had some reserved power. The North American Indians give free pass to a lunatic, on the grounds that he knows his business better than they do. Such respect was paid to this reckless young Roland by young Allan Gray.

It was inconceivable to him. Roland, as any one knew, might have taken the highest honours at the University, might sit in Parliament, might be the best man his family had ever produced. Lord S—— had talked to Allan Gray about Roland at Field Lane, praising him to the skies, and lamenting his High Church proclivities. Yet what did the puzzled Allan Gray see coming, as he thought, to save this young man?

Roland, the possible prime minister, in blue trousers, with a scarlet stripe down them; with a blue fatigue-jacket buttoned with one button at the throat, but open below, showing his white shirt. Bareheaded, for the between deck was hot; with his hands in his pockets, swaying himself to and fro, as the ship rolled. For the message had come from the sea, and the ship was afloat. This was what Allan Gray saw.

And, in addition, the proud, clean-cut, cruel, inexorable head of James Mordaunt, similarly attired, looking over Roland's shoulder. The good Allan Gray had meant to say all sorts of kindly things, but this was forced out of him.

"Is this what your talents and education have brought you to, Mr. Roland?"

"Yes," said Roland. "I am going to be a good centurion: a thundering good one, too. Eh, Jim?"

"I am sorry you should cast your talents away in such a profession," said Allan Gray.

"My dear soul, some one must do it: or what would become of those who stay at home and groan? We render your existence possible."

"It is hard to see such talents as yours thrown away in slaughtering your fellow-creatures," said Allan Gray.

"That would apply to Cromwell, as well as to me," said Roland.

"Cromwell fought for the Lord," said Allan Gray.

"I fight for civilization and the spread of the Christian religion, old man," said Roland. "Come, you have something more than this to say to me. Let us go on deck, we must always be friends, mind, come what will."

"I am here as a friend," said Allan Gray, as soon as they were on deck. "I am come to remonstrate with you about going abroad just now, when

this suit is pending between us. My case is terribly strong, and I could gladly have a compromise. You, with your territorial traditions, might do great good at Stretton. I know nothing of the management of an estate. I beg you to pause, if you can. It need never come to law if you will behave reasonably. I want money from the estate for my claim, but not for myself, only for religious purposes. I swear to you for nothing else. You shall stay at Stretton, and I will never move. I would never have moved if it were not for my poor. Roland, I beg you pause and think."

"I have paused and thought," said Roland, very quietly. "There is no personal quarrel between you and me. Let the matter go which way it will. I only go to claim a share in what is inconceivably the greatest inheritance of modern times, the government of 120,000,000 in India. What are our few sheep, under Longmynd, compared to *them?* Go to, man, I have longer views than you. You, if you live, may gain a small property in Shropshire; I shall be a satrap of the greatest empire which the world has ever seen. Would you not change with me, Allan?"

The wind was screaming and booming through the rigging, and the lights were dim and blurred on shore. The tide was hissing down to the sea, while the great ship was heaving slightly as though impatient to be gone. Close by, sentries in ramparts and fortifications, were walking to and fro, sometimes challenging—throbs of the heart of the greatest empire in the world. Gray listened and said—

"Roland, you are undertaking responsibilities which I should not have dared to undertake. God prosper you; to move you from your purpose would be ridiculous, I know. I will say no more. I shall establish my claim, but I think you and yours will be none the worse for my doing so. Yet, is there no one who could plead better than *I?*"

"Not a soul," said Roland. "Go away. Don't say a word more; *he* is listening. Go away, and God go with you." And Gray went.

"What did that mad fellow with thee?" said Jim, coming up with his hands in his pockets.

"Well, he did not *do* anything," said Roland; "but he showed me something."

"For instance?" said Jimmy.

"Well, he showed me a fanatic," said Roland.

"Only that. *I'm* that. What is *he* fanatic about?"

"Good," said Roland. "We must *try* to be as good as that man, and know the world and our duty as soldiers; and when we are killed in some petty squabble in India, Jim, our brother-officers will say they were thundering prigs, but not bad fellows, take them all in all. So you see your dinner of glory, my child."

"Well, we will eat it together, Roland," said Jim.

On the bright spring morning Roland stood on the deck with a telegram in his hand, which he had read, and which he laughed at—

"Miss Evans, Shrewsbury, to Cornet Evans, transport 'Vigilant,' Chatham. It will all go against us. Come back at any risk, and compromise. Ethel thinks as I do. She wants you to come back very much indeed."

"I will come back to you, darling," said Roland to himself. "I'll come back to you. We will come back to our Ethel some day, Jim?"

"Possibly," said Jim. "There are Eddy and Allan Gray. Good-bye, you two."

And, indeed, it was good-bye for some of them. The screw began throbbing, and the ship moved resolutely down the river. Allan Gray

and Eddy saw Roland and Jimmy standing on the bridge as they rounded the point, and then they lost sight of them. Allan Gray for ever—Eddy not for ever; he met them again.

Poor little Eddy, gallant little heart, broke down and cried on his old friend's shoulder. Gray cheered him up, as well as he could; but Gray's precious oils (good fellow as he was) were apt to break heads, and did not mend Eddy's heart.

"There she goes!" said Gray, at last.

There she went! A cobweb of rigging aloft, and two great white funnels, pouring out volcanoes of black smoke; seen above the sand-hills and the straight lines of the fortifications. So she went, throbbing her way down the great river, with Roland and Jim on board, towards the heaving Channel; towards the restless ocean; towards the vulture's feast in the far Easterly lands.

And Allan Gray took off Eddy to Field Lane, just to cheer him up with a little dissipation.

CHAPTER XXX.

"So that is all over and done," said Aunt Eleanor.

"What is over and done, Miss Evans?" asked Ethel.

"Roland."

"Is he over and done?"

"Yes, there is an end and finish of the boy, body and bones. He is gone to his death: and there were elements about him, too. I am sorry that he should die so young, unpitied and alone; but it was mainly her fault, and *hers*."

"Who is *she?*" asked Ethel.

"Never you mind. I suppose they bury them decently in Bengal; no suttee, or anything of that kind."

"My dear Miss Evans, you are speaking at random."

"My poor brother, Roland's father, saw the thing done, at all events. The woman gets on the top of the faggots drunk, and they smother her with straw and burn her up; which, on the whole, seems to me the best arrangement for all parties. A woman who would make such a fool of herself entirely deserves it."

"But that only refers to widows," said Ethel.

"I am talking of Roland's widow," said Miss Evans. "Of course he will marry a black woman now; and she will naturally want to burn herself. I should myself. A nice mess you have all made of it among you."

Ethel sat perfectly quiet. "Don't talk to me!" said Aunt Eleanor, and Ethel did as she was bid.

For Aunt Eleanor was busy in the great room at Pulverbatch with her farming accounts. And Ethel was sitting and sewing, very patiently and very quietly. "Bother the things!" said Miss Evans.

"Which?" said Ethel.

"Well, if you choose to be epigrammatical, Ethel, I will tell you. Everything. There!"

"What in particular?"

"Allan Gray."

"Certainly; and again?"

"Eddy."

"What folly has he been doing now? He might obey you, I should fancy."

"He wants to go to India. His regiment is ordered there almost at the moment he joined, and he won't exchange. Now, I made a solemn compact with him when I paid for his commission that he was to stay with me. And he is going to break his word."

"I am very glad to hear that," said Ethel.

"Why, then, Miss Mordaunt?" asked Miss Evans.

"Because you had no right to extract such a promise from such a

child; and he is perfectly right in refusing to be bound by it."

"I have done everything for him, Ethel. The love and devotion I have shown that boy has been more than any mother's. No boy ever had such tender indulgence poured on his head as I have poured on his. And, oh! that he should fly in my face. That *is* bitter."

"Shall you do well with your pigs this year, Miss Evans?" said Ethel, quietly.

"Don't be bitter and hard with me, Ethel. I have no friend but you."

"I have no friend but you, yet you whetted your wits on me just now. *You* were cruel to *me* just now. And what is your love to mine?"

"I am very sorry. I am a poor old woman, I doubt, and not good-tempered. Don't be hard on me. Say you think that Eddy has been wicked in going."

"I don't see that he has. For me, I begin to respect the child. Do you mean to say that he refuses to exchange without any prompting?"

"Not without prompting," said Miss Evans. "Allan Gray has set him against me. Allan Gray, whom I brought up, has turned against me, and has persuaded Eddy to rebel."

"I don't know what you mean by rebelling," said Ethel. "You put Eddy into the army at your expense, but you never bartered the boy's honour. If Gray has persuaded him to keep what my bonny Jim calls his *sacramentum militare*, I can only say that it is the best thing I have ever heard of him."

"You look on with complacency, then, at Eddy's being killed."

"I shall be very sorry for the child," said Ethel. "But you must remember that I have a brother there, and also many people go to India who are *not* killed."

"I wanted him to stay at home," said Aunt Eleanor, showing her imbecility on the only point on which she was capable of showing it—Eddy.

"Well, and Allan Gray did not choose him to stay at home, very rightly it seems to me. When he has gone to India, Allan Gray is to be our lord and master, and we have only to submit."

"Ah! you may laugh, who love no one; but for me, I am an old woman, and love Eddy."

"Heaven save you, Miss Evans, from ever being so heartsick as I am, and forgive you the words just spoken. Here *is* Eddy. You say I love no one, do you? That was a cruel and bitter thing to say, Miss Evans. You lose your better nature when you say such things as that. I will not bear it from you, Miss Evans. I will go to John and my father. *They* can love me, at all events."

And so both these very good souls began to cry, both resolute in their causeless quarrel, just as Eddy came into the room, and said, "Hallo! you two, I am off out of this by next week."

Ethel scornfully withdrew herself into a window. She did not *hate* Eddy, but, putting him always beside his brother, she despised him. Aunt Eleanor wept.

"Have you been quarrelling, you two?" asked Eddy. "There is no good in that. *I* used to quarrel with Jim until that bathing business. For me, I am going to quarrel with no one in future except Her Majesty's enemies."

He said it in mere fun, but looking at them again, he saw that they had really been quarrelling. He looked right and left for a moment, and thought; then he went up to Ethel, knelt beside her, and took her hand.

"Ethel, my glorious Ethel! Will you think for one moment how dear you are to me, through James, and, if I dare say it, through Roland? I am

going away after Roland and James, into that dim East from which many never return. Come, Ethel, sister of my heart, let me tell them that you and old aunt were good friends. Come! make it up. Aunty! aunty! aunty! who will you have when I am gone?"

Ethel sat quite still. She meant no permanent quarrel, and was quite prepared to let Miss Evans walk over her body. Yet she waited and listened; for Miss Evans had been uncommonly reticent lately, and Ethel was determined to know as much as she could. She took Eddy's hand, however, and kissed it, saying, "Blessed are the peacemakers."

Aunt Eleanor resorted to tears, and bemoaned the general ingratitude of the age. She did this categorically, stating her case against the world. The next time Mr. Gladstone, or it may be Mr. Disraeli, goes out, they will do exactly the same thing. At this moment, it is possible that we may hear the same sort of thing from Mr. Johnson before this is published. What Mr. Johnson may say I cannot tell. Aunt Eleanor's case was simply this:

Her brother had been a good brother to her, but had been indiscreet, and she had kept his indiscretions perfectly quiet. And now every one was turning against her. She had faced her own father and mother, in the Waterloo time, when accusations were brought against him, and when she was the only soul who knew that he had married that ridiculous child. She had fought her brother's battle, and then her brother had been hard on her about her way of going to market for herself. She had fought Jack Mordaunt's battle, and his daughter Ethel had turned on her. She had fought the Dean of St. Paul's battle (how she did not say), and he never came near her. She had been a good friend to every one who had known her. She had been a good landlady, good sister, good aunt, good everything; but every one had thrown her overboard. Allan Gray, for instance. Take him. She had no idea of his perfectly ridiculous pretensions; but had been more than a mother to him. He had got hold of this Phyllis Myrtle story, and was turning against her. To Eddy, that black-hearted boy, she would say nothing at all. He was past that. She had believed at one time that Ethel would be her friend, but now Ethel had turned. She wished she was dead. She was proceeding to say that she had a reputation for common sense, but there was no one near enough to her to appreciate it, and was becoming blinded with tears, when she found that Ethel and Eddy were kneeling before her, with their hands in one another's.

"What are you doing, you very ungrateful creatures?" she said.

"Please, aunt," said Eddy, "we are kneeling to ask you not to be silly."

"Well, I won't if you don't drive me to it, my pretty ones. But you will, if you don't take care. Have I been *very* silly?"

"Extremely so," said Eddy. "Come, aunty, what *is* the matter? What has put you beside yourself like this? Why do you quarrel with us two?"

"Law, it is all Allan Gray," she said. "Get up, do."

"Have you forgiven us?" said Eddy.

"No," said Aunt Eleanor. "You are a couple of fools; and I hate fools."

"Why am *I* a fool, Miss Evans?" said Ethel.

"Because you might have managed better. I have no patience. Why, bless you, time was when, if I had given encouragement——"

"To the Dean of St. Paul's?" said Ethel.

"Don't be ridiculous, I beg of you," said Aunt Eleanor.

"Why am I a fool, aunty?" said Eddy.

"Because you won't exchange. Because you will go to India."

"Then I will not go, if you command me, aunt," said Eddy, sighing, and looking at her. "I owe all I have in the world to you; but if you command me, I will stay at home. For you, aunt, I will desert all, Roland, Jim, honour, career; you have only to say *stay*, and I will exchange. Aunt, say that word 'exchange,' and I will do it. Roland and Jim shall not stand in the way if you say it. Come!"

Aunt Eleanor rose and leant against the wall, hiding her face. Her sublime agony was so terrible to the young people that they were hushed and dumb. She turned after a time, and she said,—

"Eddy, my own, my best-beloved, go. Ethel, stay with the poor old woman. I shall have no one but you."

"You have told me to go, aunt," said Eddy, very cool, but a little pale.

"I will tell you again if you will. My brother was at Waterloo."

"Then I will go," said Eddy. "But I will stay now if you will unsay your words."

She held her peace.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"WHAT is Allan Gray like, Miss Evans?" asked Ethel.

"Well," said Aunt Eleanor, "you will see him directly for yourself, for he is coming here in a quarter of an hour."

"Then I will fly," said Ethel.

"Indeed and you just exactly won't," said Miss Evans. "I will not be left alone with him, I assure you. I might be tempted to say something unbecoming my position to him. And he is a very good fellow, when all is said and done—a deal better than some of us."

"But I also might say something to hurt his feelings," said Ethel. "I am exasperated with him also. Is he handsome?"

"He is amazingly handsome," she replied; "as handsome as Roley Poley, in his way. You shall see for yourself, for here he is coming across the moat. Tell James to show him straight in, and stand behind my chair." And so the good lady faced towards the door; and Allan Gray entering, for the first time saw Ethel Mordaunt.

Aunt Eleanor saw a sudden startled flush in Allan Gray's face as he caught sight of Ethel's splendid beauty, and she said to herself, "Here is all mischief to pay. Bother the fellow! what did he want coming here for? He is going to fall in love with her. And so you shall, my fine master!" she went on in thought, in a moment more. "I'll plague you for this business. I have got *you*, my young master. I'll have the plaguing of you. Ah! look at and blush; you may well. I will be cat, shall I? Ho!"

And, to the unutterable astonishment of Ethel and Allan Gray, she said suddenly to the latter,—

"How d'ye do, Mouse?"

Ethel bent down. "Why did you call him that?"

"What?" she asked.

"Why, Mouse."

"I beg your pardon," said Miss Evans, slightly disturbed. "I meant to say, 'How d'ye do, Mr. Gray?' I am very sorry to see you. I always was, you know. You and I don't owe one another anything, and don't like one another. You have heard of Miss Ethel Mordaunt?"

Allan Gray said that he had had that honour.

"Well, now you have the honour of seeing her. That is she behind my chair, looking at you, and think-

ing—what are you thinking of, Ethel?"

"I am thinking that unless you offer Mr. Gray a chair, I shall go and get him one."

"Excellent; witty, in faith. My dear Gray, sit down. I am not at all glad to see you, as I told you before—and yet I don't know, Allan, when all is said and done. I am getting old, and the faces I love best are going into the East, to be seen no more. It may come that I may be so utterly alone in my old age that yours may become dear to me. You are going to try to dispossess my Roland, but you believe in your case. Let it be; we will fight that, you and I. But you love my Eddy, and that is a bond between us. Do you know that your Eddy is going to India?"

"I deeply regret to hear it, Miss Evans. I am deeply pained that you should let him go."

"Honour orders him there. My boy shall never exchange to avoid service, though it may tear my heart out. Come, Allan, *you* never would; I know you well enough for that."

"I—no," said Gray; "but Eddy is so different. He has seen no sorrow and no sin. Could not one be spared? Mine has been a most unhappy life; and God knows I have risked it often enough."

"And indeed you *have*," said Aunt Eleanor, roundly. "Ethel, my dear, our boys will have the chance of charging half a dozen times into desperately ranked masses of our enemies, and perishing gloriously or winning fame which lives in men's mouths. Mr. Gray faces death, not once in a way in the fury of battle, but every day, and nearly all day, in fever-plagued courts and alleys. Ask Letheby what he has got to say about Mr. Gray's work in the cholera, and then you will understand that when the Victoria Cross is allowed to civilians for valour, Allan Gray will have five or six of them."

"So I should be disposed to think, from his personal appearance," said Ethel, as coolly as if she was admiring a handsome sideboard.

Even Aunt Eleanor started for an instant, and looked round at her. Ethel was leaning over the back of the chair, and looking fixedly and with every symptom of admiration on Allan Gray. Aunt Eleanor had not at that moment time to reflect that when such a pure and noble woman as Ethel has utterly given her heart to one man, as Ethel had to Roland, she would allow herself freedom of speech in all innocence towards other men, a freedom of speech she never would have dreamt of had she been fancy-free.

Aunt Eleanor was quite puzzled for the time, but she went on, speaking very quickly—

"Are you come to see me about any law?"

"No, madam," said Allan Gray. "I only came to pay my respects to the lady to whom I owe everything in the world—to yourself. You say we do not like one another, Miss Evans. I have often heard you say that before. But allow me to say that the dislike is entirely on your side."

"Well, I believe it is," said Miss Evans. "It exists, however, and perhaps I have sufficient dislike to keep us both going. For I *don't* like you, you know, and I never did. I'll tell you what is the best thing you can do, if you don't mind. Spend the day with me, and stop to dinner."

"I would if I thought I could remove some prejudices from your mind," said Gray.

"Lord bless the man! you'll never do that with me. I am all prejudice from beginning to end. Most women are. My dear young man, everybody's creed is a mere mass of prejudice—Whig, Tory, Democrat. The only party in this country which will never see power are the doctrinaire Radicals, the only unprejudiced party. And it

they do get in, a nice mess they will make of it."

"You do not believe in Academi Girondisms," said Gray, smiling.

"Not a bit. I tried it forty years ago, when I was beginning to get old, and it won't do at all. Be a Radical or a Tory at once. But come, Allan, as an old enemy, stay with us to-day and dine; and I will see if I can get evidence from you and upset your ridiculous lawsuit. Come."

"As an old and obliged *friend*, I will," said Allan Gray, "with the greatest pleasure. Remember, I have never sat down to table with a lady in my life. What time do you dine, Miss Evans?"

"Miss Evans dines at one," said Ethel, very quietly. "*She* calls it lunch. Shall I stay and dine with you, Miss Evans, because I am going with Johnny riding at three?"

"If you please, dear," said Aunt Eleanor, feeling rather guilty, and a little frightened. "Yes, do stay. Let us go for a walk on the farm. We will see the farm. It is a great farm, Allan Gray. It is one of the greatest farms in the county. It is all to be Eddy's, and a nice mess *he* will make of it. Few people, I should be inclined to say, have greater capabilities of making a great mess of a farm than Eddy. What is your own opinion?"

"I should be inclined to agree with you," said Gray. "But he will scarcely venture to farm it himself. So he might get a good tenant, you see."

"Might. Yes, he *might*. But he would choose the first smooth-spoken goose who offered for it. However, he will get his throat cut in India, and so it does not much matter."

So they walked and talked till dinner-time, and then they dined together. Miss Evans's talk was sharp, sarcastic, nearly *boisterous*, all the time. She was in terror at what she was doing. And immediately after dinner Allan Gray went off, and Aunt Eleanor knew that she had gained her object. Allan Gray was entangled with Ethel.

Ethel went away across the valley home; and she went home with a vengeance. She caused visitors to come that very evening—no less than three of them. Aunt Eleanor seldom had worse times than that evening.

CHAPTER XXXII.

SHE sat by herself before the window, and as soon as she knew it was quite too late, she began reflecting what an awful thing she had done in a moment of spiteful triumph. It looked pleasant at first. But it looked more terrible as the afternoon went on, and she sat and pondered over it.

The first thing she said was, "Now, young man, I have got a rod for your back. You know nothing, I fancy, of her feeling for Roland. The time will come, however, when you will. I do not like you at all, when all is said and done; and I have let you sit at table with a lady. You quiet men, when you *do* get hit with a woman, will go further after her than any others. And you are hit. It may not have been wise, but I am not always wise. *If you come here, thrusting your claims in on county families, you must take the penalties.* You can't blame me. If you win this suit, as they say you will, you would be forced to know ladies. I have only introduced you to one; and you seem to have taken your choice."

Such was the illogical nonsense with which this excellent woman strove to excuse herself for the only silly and spiteful action I shall have to record of her at all. She was too sensible to believe in her own logic for long. She began to look at her action from another point of view.

"If he *does* turn out to be heir after

all, and Roland only half-brother, I have done a very silly thing, I doubt. I wish I had not done it now. But he must have seen her some time or another in that case, and so it would have been just the same; unless he had thought of ranging himself with some one else. In which case it might have been different. Why, here is George Mordaunt."

It was that ponderous squire indeed, who gave his horse to a man, opened the door of the Grange, came straight into her room, and, leaning against the chimney-piece, confronting her, said, "Eleanor! Eleanor!"

"What is the matter now?" she asked, sharply.

"You might have thought of our two poor boys upon the wide sea, of Roland and Jimmy—good lads as ever walked, good lads—before you recognized that scoundrel publicly, and introduced him to, and let him sit at meat with, my daughter."

"What scoundrel?"

"Allan Gray."

"He is no scoundrel. I brought him up. He is a very good fellow."

"Well, then, that watchmaker's apprentice. I don't wish Ethel to sit at table with watchmakers' apprentices, Eleanor."

"Jeweller," said Aunt Eleanor, rubbing her nose and looking straight at him.

"Or jewellers' either, then," said Squire Mordaunt. "Eleanor, my dear old friend, why did you do such a thing?"

"Spite, mainly," said Aunt Eleanor.

"Against whom?"

"Against him. I wanted him to fall in love with Ethel, and he has done it. Now, then, what do you think of that?"

Squire Mordaunt stamped his foot. "Eleanor, are you *mad?*"

"I was when I did that. I fancy I am a little less mad now."

"It is time you were. It is not the least use talking to you. You are in one of those strange downrigh moods, which I never saw any woman in before or since; when you will make a fool of yourself, and then confess it in the most exasperating way. How dare you do such a thing! How dare you even show my daughter to an impostor like him! Ethel comes here no more."

"You won't tell HER?" said Aunt Eleanor, thoughtfully, with her head on her hand.

"How could I dare?" said Squire Mordaunt. "Do you think I am mad? But she comes here no more. Do you know that the fellow may succeed in his suit, and that he is very handsome? Do you know that Ethel might lose her heart to him?"

"Do you suppose, George," said Aunt Eleanor, quietly, "that if I had not known Ethel's character perfectly, and had not been aware that her heart was irretrievably gone already, I would have done such a thing? I tell you that I did it to plague the man."

"I wish you would plague him with some one else than my daughter. What is this that I hear about Ethel's heart being gone? To whom has she given it, then?"

"To Roland."

"Good Heavens! He seems to have taken the matter rather lightly. I thought that he was almost engaged to Mary Maynard."

"Sit down, George."

George sat down.

"No one knew where Ethel had given her heart but myself and James."

"My James?"

"Yes; and James had given his heart elsewhere."

"My poor Jim. Do I know where?"

"To Mildred Evans—Mildred Maynard."

"Well, I pretty nearly knew that. That is nothing."

"I don't know about *that*," said Aunt Eleanor.

"These details are nothing to me.

I want to know why you had young Gray here. If it is as you say, you have made him a rival of Roland. Does Roland care for Ethel?"

"Aye, he loves her now."

"Confounded young prig! I hope he will eat his heart out. Like his impudence not to say so before going to India."

"I am not sure that he did not. But see, George; you know Mrs. Maynard, of the Barton, well enough to know that she lives in mischief."

"Well?"

"She has made mischief between Bob Maynard and his wife about your boy. Poor furious Jim wrote her a letter from sea; and she cried over it—not once, nor twice, but three or four times. And the old —— Lady —— contrived that she should be crying over it about the fifth time, when her husband came and demanded it from her; and she had to give it up."

"What was her object?"

"To make that stupid ox, Maynard, jealous, and keep herself and Mary in the house; moreover, to make Maynard savage with Sir Jasper Meredith, and keep *him* to book."

"What has that child been doing?"

"Well, he has proposed to Mary, and been accepted, and now he wants to cry off."

"Proposed to Mary?"

"Yes, he did it to save Roland, and the old woman is keeping him to book; and we shall have much fun out of it. Are you satisfied with my explanation?"

"Not a bit," said Squire Mordaunt. "You have only confused counsel, *nigra loligine*. Only until you *chassé* Gray, Ethel sees you no more."

"Well, well! I will agree. Come, are you angry still?"

"I think, Eleanor, that you have done a thing I should have conceived you utterly incapable of. You have admitted into your house the pretender to your nephew's fortune, and have introduced him to my daughter, as you yourself confess, with a view to his being attracted by her. If there was a woman in England, I could have trusted you. But this is outrageous!"

"I know, I know. I am nearly out of my mind over my Eddy. George, don't give me up. George, be my friend. I will do what you tell me ——. Heavens! here is my sister-in-law, full speed! George, stay by me."

There was, indeed, Mrs. Evans. Nimbly the widow dashed up to the Grange in her pony-carriage, and in half a minute after came swiftly into the room, and, without any preparation of any sort or kind whatever, denounced her:

"It was not enough, Eleanor Evans, that you kept my husband's guilty secret for so many years—you pretending to a saint-like godliness of life. It was not enough that you persistently and systematically set Ethel Mordaunt against my Roland, until he was driven to his death in India. It was not enough that your changing your intention of not marrying again renewed old overtures to the Dean of St. Paul's, relinquished by him years ago, and repenting of your intentions towards my Eddy, sent him abroad after his unhappy brother: this was not enough—no——"

"I should have thought that was enough for anybody," said Aunt Eleanor. "What is the next thing?"

"You must receive the illegitimate rival of my son in your house, pet him, and give him lunch. I wish to see no more of you, Eleanor. You are a bad, false woman; and if Charles rises from his grave, I hope he will knock at your door!" With which singular conclusion Mrs. Evans departed swiftly; Eleanor saying not one word.

"Little pots are soon hot," said George Mordaunt.

"Not one solitary word," said Aunt Eleanor.

"You seem in the way of catching it," said Squire Mordaunt.

"I shall catch it worse than this before all is over. Sit still. Don't desert me."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"HERE comes young George," said Miss Evans. "I suppose he will begin on me next."

"I will stop him; you have had quite enough of it. But I say, Eleanor, you'll let me have that right of way, won't you. Come?"

"No, I won't," said Miss Evans. "I'll nail my colours to the mast about it. I'll tell you what I will do with you—I will let you have it the very day Eddy comes home from India."

"That's a bargain then, you obstinate woman. Mind that."

"Come in," said Miss Evans, and accordingly in came young Mordaunt, grown even since we first knew him in size, good-nature, good-humour, and quiet shrewdness."

"Have you been catching it, Miss Evans," he said, laughing.

"*Rather*," she said. "Mrs. Evans has been here and cast me off for ever, and your father has damaged my feelings to that extent that I feel ten years older than I did ten hours ago. But we have made it up, your father and I."

"Has he got the right of way?" asked young Mordaunt.

"No, and he just exactly has *not*," said Miss Evans. "He has *asked* for it."

"Hey, sir, hey, sir," said young Mordaunt. "Have you been taking advantage of a British lady in distress, sir. Oh, father, this was most mean."

"I have as good as got it, though," said Squire Mordaunt, triumphantly. "I am to have it the day Eddy comes home."

"Well, don't talk of it any more. Stay here and be comfortable. I wish you would talk to me about the claim."

"I should like to talk it through with you, very much indeed. Let us do so. I have found out the crux of the whole business," said Mordaunt. "I want you to tell me every word that you know."

"I will gladly do so," said Miss Evans.

"George, my boy, just step down and do exactly as I told you," said Squire Mordaunt; "be very civil and kind to her, and bring her up here. Give her a glass of wine, or gin, or brimstone, or something in Miss Evans' servants' hall to keep her tongue going till we are ready for her. Don't let her get too drunk, or she may get pot valiant."

"Well, that is a singular order in a lone woman's house," said Miss Evans.

"*It is*. You shall see why, my dear Eleanor. Now tell us the whole business, from beginning to end."

"You know you thought I deceived you when you got that anonymous letter, and I told you that it was the old Cecil Evans' claim."

"Yes, yes! I beg your pardon. I want to see how much you know about this Allan Gray."

Aunt Eleanor got up and walked slowly up and down, very slowly, with her hands folded behind her back, and began speaking slowly and methodically.

"It was the eve of Waterloo,"* said Aunt Eleanor, "that my new maid came to me: a girl we had brought up almost in the family; my own foster-sister indeed. I was like many other British women, mad at that time, and I set all the doors open and strode up

* The drawing of this scene was nearly, if not absolutely, the last finished thing which came from the hand of the late George Thomas. It shews us Aunt Eleanor in her youthful beauty, with her emphatic masculine walk, given as few could give it better than the hand now still for ever.

and down the room ejaculating, for I did not mind making a fool of myself before her. I was rampaging; you know my way; when I turned round and saw that my sister-in-law was crying hysterically."

"Your what? did you say."

"My sister-in-law, my brother Charles's wife, then acting for me as my lady's-maid."

"Then it *is* true," said Squire Mordaunt,"

"All *that* is true," said Miss Evans.

"The devil!" said Mordaunt.

"Don't interrupt. Late that night I found I could do nothing with her. My mother went to her, found out the truth, and I never saw her again. I had no conception of what was the matter, but I knew afterwards that she and he were in love, in the honourable way customary in our family and in yours.

"My mother sent the girl to Carlisle, for she had relations there, and it was far enough off. My mother believed Charles was guilty. He was not: he behaved nobly. He knew that no consent could possibly be gained from his parents to such an alliance. He knew that he had gained the girl's love; and so when he came home from Waterloo he went straight to Carlisle and married her; after which he wrote to me and told me all the truth, binding me to secresy.

"The secret was not mine, but his, and I kept it. I told him that he had acted like a man and a gentleman, but also like a fool and a coward. You can't think how often I told him that last piece of my mind."

"Very often indeed, I don't doubt," said Mordaunt.

"Don't be absurd, I beg. My father found out from a very foolish servant of Charles's, who was the girl's brother, that Charles was at Carlisle with her. He was furious: you know the horror our houses have of such matters. Charles was recalled by his colonel and ordered to Chatham, still keeping his secret. In six months the poor girl was confined, and Charles was a widower. He was ordered to India, thinking it still well to say nothing, in spite of my remonstrances. He knew the horror my father had of Scotch marriages, and he left the child to take its chance, with only myself with a knowledge of the truth, and one more."

"Phyllis Myrtle?" said Squire Mordaunt.

"I see you know more than I thought," said Aunt Eleanor.

"I am very much afraid that I know everything, Eleanor. But I must know more from you. Did the girl's mother, this old hag Gray, know about this marriage?

"Certainly not. How is it possible? Would she not have made her claims if she had? But to proceed, my dear George; this child of Charles's died, legitimate or illegitimate, it does not matter much now. I saw it dead with my own eyes."

"Exactly. Now we come to the soldier Gray. Tell us about him."

"Well, he got married to a girl in Donington just about the time that his master married his sister at Carlisle, and his wife was sent home to his mother for her confinement. The child which was born there was Allan Gray, whom I brought up, by my mother's request, as being legitimately I knew, illegitimately as she thought, my own nephew."

Squire Mordaunt uttered a terrible oath. Remember that swearing was hardly gone out even twelve years ago among old-fashioned people. He said his oath, apologized, and then went on, very quietly, and very much ashamed of himself.

"My dear Eleanor, I beg your pardon. I am very sorry indeed. But answer me a few questions. You say that you saw poor Charles's baby lying dead."

"I did."

"Can you remember it? I want to know particularly."

"Yes. I am not likely to forget: for, George," she said, laying her hand on his arm, and bursting suddenly out crying, "it was the first time I ever looked on death. Oh, Eddy, Eddy, Eddy! I shall never see you lying dead, my darling. Why did I let him go! Why did I let him go!"

Squire Mordaunt walked to the window for a little time, and then came quietly back and kissed her. "Come, old girl, never mind Eddy. I have sent a boy, and you have sent a boy. Be quiet, we shall want all our wits about us directly. I want to know about that baby of Charles's which you saw lying dead. Was it dressed?"

"No, it was naked, with a cloth over it, and they raised the cloth, and I cried a great deal; and I looked at it closely, for it was very beautiful, George."

"Now you are going to begin to whimper again," said Mordaunt, "and I won't have it. Was there any mark on it?"

"Not one that I noticed."

"No wart, no wen, no mark of any kind by which you could swear?"

"Not one, poor little thing."

"Then we will drop it, and go on to business. Do you know what they have done?"

"No."

"Changed foxes—I should say babies; *that* is it."

"Good heavens! give me time, George. What do you mean?"

"Who showed you that baby, and under what circumstances?"

"Mrs. Myrtle sent for me, or was it Mrs. Gray? It was one of them. I know our secret began then, and asked me to come down, and I went. And Mrs. Myrtle told me that my brother's child was dead. I think it was so. I am not certain. And I asked to look at it, or they asked me, and I saw it, and I cried."

"That baby, you say, was the soldier Gray's child, and not Charles's at all. The heir of Stretton is Allan Gray, or, as they have ventured to call him, Charles Evans. And these two old trots have some strong proof of it also, or the solicitors' house which they are employing would not look at their case for five minutes. Hi, Georgey, bring in Mrs. Phyllis Myrtle."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Young Mordaunt had so far fulfilled his father's injunctions as to bring Mrs. Myrtle in sufficiently sober for business. Yet Mrs. Myrtle was dimly conscious of requiring some sort of apology for coming at all, or for coming as she was; or for having done what she had done; or for venturing to exist at all, that she appeared before Miss Evans and Squire Mordaunt in a deeply apologetic frame of mind. Dickens would have made something out of her; she has too few salient points for a slighter hand at caricature. Possibly George Mordaunt the younger described one phase of her character better than any of us, by saying that she was a persistently complacent liar. This was, however, only one phase in her character. She had Quicklyisms other than that, some of which we cannot deal with; one certainly which we may. For example; she was a perfect and absolute mistress of the art of sotting. Her knowledge of drinks was enormous and varied. Her experience of different kinds of strong waters was absolutely gigantic, yet to a certain extent limited. She would never on any account touch a strange drink, such as champagne or Eau des Carmes. Offer her gin: she would take as much as she wanted; offer her Chambertin, a more innocent liquor, she would stoutly refuse. She knew exactly how tipsy she wanted to be, and she regarded Chambertin

green Chartreuse, champagne, as unknown liquors, not to be trusted. She disliked being sober, but she dreaded being drunk. She had too much to tell.

She is one of those women of whom doctors can tell you. A woman of infinite good-nature and immeasurable wickedness. Mrs. Gray was no better than she should be, a bold, coarse, handsome, grey-headed woman, with a rude, wild tongue. A woman not of the best character. Put Phyllis Myrtle beside her, a gentle, good-natured, apple-faced little woman; nay, an affectionate little woman towards young people; which was the better of the two? Mrs. Gray immeasurably. She had saved more young girls from evil than even Phyllis Myrtle had succeeded in ruining.

Squire Mordaunt, an old, trained, diligent county magistrate, knowing the world in which he lived, by having it brought before him in its lowest aspect, knew this woman, and recoiled from her. He looked at Aunt Eleanor, and she recoiled also. "Be gentle and civil to this old hag, Eleanor," he said in a whisper, leaning over her chair. "I will," said Aunt Eleanor, "but you make her tell. Stand where you are."

So Squire Mordaunt, leaning over Aunt Eleanor's chair, with the power of whispering in her ear without being heard, brought out Mrs. Myrtle's story in her own manner.

"Sit down, Mrs. Myrtle. Will you have a glass of wine, Mrs. Myrtle?"

"Thank your honour's handsome face, no."

"Had enough, eh?"

"Quite enough, thank you, sir."

"You won't get any at all in prison, you know," said Squire Mordaunt.

"I am equally aware of the fact, sir," said Mrs. Myrtle, coolly. "But I don't mean to go there, if it is the same to you."

"Conspiracy is a dangerous thing, Mrs. Myrtle."

"As a general rule it is. But when such a lady as Miss Evans has to go into the dock with an old woman like me I naturally feels comfortable."

"What do you mean?" said Mordaunt.

"I only mean that Miss Evans knew as much as I did; and that where I go she shall go, if I am treated uncivil."

"That is false," said Aunt Eleanor.

"It is good enough to swear to if I was drove to turn Queen's evidence," said Mrs. Myrtle. "Conspiracy, indeed! *You* told all you knew, didn't you, Miss Evans?"

"Woman! woman!" said Aunt Eleanor. "This will not serve you."

"It will unless I am treated civil," said Old Myrtle, crying. "I came here from the best of motives, and Squire Mordaunt (you are a sweet saint, ain't you, to talk so to an old woman who *remembers* you when you were a boy), he begins on me about *conspiracy*."

"Well, and so you are going to be civil and tell us all you know, Mrs. Myrtle?" said Aunt Eleanor.

"Certainly, Miss," she said. And so she did.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"LUCKY beggar, he has got married, *and hung his hat up*."

That hanging up of the hat was in old times the *facon de parler* by which naval and military men made one to understand that Captain or Major So-and-so was utterly and entirely free from all earthly cares of any sort whatever. Listen to them at the Naval, Military, Marine, Militia, Volunteer, West Coast of Africa Club in Pall Mall. "Where

is Joe Buggins?" said Captain Kimberton, R.N.

"Lucky beggar," says Captain Bob Singleton, R.N. "He has hung up his hat, got married, and gone ashore for good."

"Has she money?" says Kimberton.

"£400 a year," says Singleton.

"Dash it, some men are always in luck," says Kimberton. "Well, I shall be afloat till I die."

Says Toodle, of the 944th West India Regiment, to Teedle of Her Majesty's 80th, "I made a mess of it in leaving the best regiment in the service. Boodle is over my head now, I doubt."

"Boodle has hung up his hat," says Teedle (or used to say), "Boodle has married a widow with £500 a year, the least penny, and has cut the service."

"Lucky beggar!" says Toodle, and thinks that Boodle has arrived at the summit of all human happiness.

Now it so happens that I have lived alongside of both Kimberton and Boodle in my time, alongside of these men who have *left* their professions to be married, and all I can say is, that Kimberton would give ten years of his life to be on the West Coast of Africa, and Boodle would give twenty to have been in Abyssinia.

These men had served so long that they began to know how to serve; and then they found themselves in a position to marry. And they fell in love with two girls with money. And the Paterfamilias of the period, finding that they could make no great settlements, demanded of them that they should insure their lives, and give up their profession.

I can point out a case now, of a girl without a farthing being engaged to a man who might have done well at the bar, and who was solely dependent on his father. She insisted that he should give up his profession, and he, being in love, did so. Those two lives are as good as lost. But to return to Kimberton and Boodle.

A great many women who marry men in the services stipulate that the men should "hang up their hats," and cease to *be* men. Should turn into spaniels, to dangle after their wives' heels to balls and croquet parties. Now this is an intolerable thing, although the virtuous and unattackable Paterfamilias encourages it. Look at the common sense of the matter. Fancy locking up two entirely idle people together for their lives. Can love stand it? I fancy not. Man and wife will go to the world's end, or further, for one another any day of the week, as the end of the world well sees, provided the wife sees that the husband is working, and the husband sees that the wife is minding. A couple such as that will pull through great things. But to lock up two young people alone, apparently for ever, she frivolous and silly, he capable of better things, but bound either by his wife or his father-in-law to forego them; this I say is dangerous.

To go in for another moment about Kimberton and Boodle. Contrast the lives which these two excellent officers might have lived, with the life which they were forced to lead, in consequence of the foolish English notion, that marriage is to be a perpetual honeymoon, with, after a time, babies superadded.

Take Kimberton's case. Kimberton was a man extremely valuable to his profession. A man passed in steam, which all were not in those days. A man who saw among the first that naval tactics would more than ever consist in rapidly turning on an individual enemy, that the nation which could best imitate the old Elizabethan tactics, must win. A speaker of five languages, a geologist, a botanist; a man whose credit for personal amiability could fill a ship in a week, while others stood empty

for months, or never filled at all. A man of pure and godly life, and a man who could keep his head, as he had proved once or twice, under the most desperate circumstances. A man in a dozen. Where was he? With Lyons? With Peel? Not at all. Wasting all his power and knowledge at the heels of his wife; because his wife's family had stipulated that he should not leave the United Kingdom.

Take *Mrs.* Kimberton again. She was one of the first to pray and beseech that it should be rendered impossible for dear Arthur to go to those horrid wars. It *was* rendered impossible. When she got a little less silly, she began to see that she had married a ghost and a dead man. A ghost of a dead man, who scarcely cared to read the telegrams to *her*. A ghost of a useless man, who would come suddenly in with the *Times* in his hand, and say, gloomily, "Lyons has taken the *Agamemnon* in under Constantine, with the *Retribution* on the larboard side. The Russians have cut away the main-mast of the *Retribution*. Edmund Lyons has done no good with all his bravery. Wood against stone. I wish I was there."

And then, seeing that he was pacing up and down the room, eating his heart out, she would show him baby, and jump baby up and down till the poor little thing was sick. That was her remedy for a man whose comrades were dying round Sebastopol.

Look again at Boodle, if you will have the goodness. The private in the British army is not much given to sentimentalities towards his officer; as a general rule he values one officer much the same as another. Privates don't *discuss* their officers much. Corporals and sergeants do Yet Boodle, when he left his regiment to marry the rich widow, was followed by the lamentations of all the privates in his company. They would have followed him to the ends of the earth, and further. But the good widow said that she was not going to ride on a baggage wagon, and that he must give up his profession. They get on very well, because the amiability and pluck which attracted the widow were just the same qualities which attracted and bound the private soldiers. But Boodle was sick of his life.

It could scarcely be pleasant for a well-preserved widow, to find her young husband walking wildly up and down the house, saying, "If I had been there at my place this would not have happened."

"What is the matter now?" says Mrs. Boodle.

"Willoughby has been forced to fire the magazine at Delhi. My God! My poor friend! If I could only have died with him instead of rotting here in inaction."

And Mrs. Boodle has not even a baby to dance before him; and when he is forty she will be fifty-two, paint she never so wisely. And she brought him £600 a year. And as a general he would have had £1,200. I don't like to go into the old age of the Boodles.

But Moral. My dear young lady, whenever you marry, make your husband *work*. The more he works the better for him; and for you also. Don't get too easily into the delusion that "dear George is overworked." Overwork means very often "Club" (and you should set your face against all clubs, save the Athenæum and Garrick). Overwork means very often sheer laziness. Think of the number of fine fellows hungering for work up and down England, but who cannot get it, in the Church for want of opportunity, in the army for want of money, in literature for the one fatal fault, the want of felicity of expression. If your husband in any way finds work to his hand, I beg you as a special favour, in return for any little pleasure I have given you, *to keep him at it*. No man ever

worked himself to death yet, except Pitt, and his four bottles of Port wine a day had much more to do with it than the sheer work.

£846,000,000 first and last.

A low remark you say. Well, but we extinguished France, and left her a third-rate power for ever, with her navy quite destroyed. The Spaniards know nothing at all of our immortal Peninsular Campaign, though they *did* make the Duke of Wellington grandee of the first order. But about young Maynard, who had nothing to do with Pitt's war, or the wars which succeeded on Pitt's policy. We had possibly better speak of him soon.

He had not much chance of being overworked, though he was paying his share of the annual £26,000,000. Mrs. Maynard had insisted, and had got her daughter-in-law to back her in her request, that Maynard should leave the university, leave his proposed career at the bar, and come and live at home. And the good-natured fellow, pressed by his bride's tender coaxings, his mother's persistent clatter, and his sister's repetitions of his mother's arguments, had consented.

There had always been an understanding between mother and son, that the mother should leave the house when the son was married. This was well enough, and Mrs. Maynard had always spoken of it as a foregone conclusion. She had more than once taken Mildred over the house, shown her the store-closets, asked if she might carry away this or that trifle with her, when she went; and so on. But when they were married and had settled down in their home, and had looked about them for a month or so, they made the remark that Mrs. Maynard was not gone, and had made no particular preparations *for* going. Likewise a still greater discovery, that there was not any place for her to go to: at least no place in particular.

They never said one word about this at all, but submitted as quietly and as dutifully as possible. They talked about it in bed sometimes, but very slightly. It was no annoyance to them. Old Mrs. Maynard took care that it should not be.

She had given up her comfortable rooms on the ground-floor, and moved into three little rooms on the third, carrying Mary with her. They were good enough she said for them, during the short time they were to stay. Maynard and his wife remonstrated with her, and begged her to make herself quite comfortable. But she was quite resolute. The understanding, she said, had always been, that she was to leave the house when her son was married, and she only begged house-room and victuals till she could get a home of her own. Nay, this high-spirited lady begged Mildred to let her pay her own and Mary's board, which made Mildred cry.

"That is an artful old toad," said young Mordaunt to his father one evening.

"What is the last move?" said the Squire.

"Why, she has bought a wagon load of furniture at Old Dempster's sale, and she has brought it home to the Barton, and has begged the Big One as a special favour to let her store it there for a week or so before she goes."

"Law," said Aunt Eleanor, "why, the very bugs in the bedsteads will be dead for want of their natural food before *she* ever sleeps in one of them. And they live long, don't they, Ethel?"

"*I* call them ladybirds, Miss Evans," said Ethel.

"Ah! but then I call them bugs, don't you see," said Miss Evans, "which is quite a different matter. You might call them what you liked, so long as some of them got hold of her and dragged her out of her bed on to the key-cold floor on a frosty night. The old *trot*, *she* won't go."

"Well, it is not any business of ours, Eleanor," said Squire Mordaunt.

"I never said it was," said Miss Evans, "but I mean to talk about it for all that, and so I don't deceive you. Fiddle-de-dee; everybody talks over my affairs and over Eddy's, and I shall talk over everybody else's. I suppose *you* never mention your neighbours' affairs, hey?"

"Well, I do sometimes," said Squire Mordaunt.

"You never talk about anything else," said Aunt Eleanor. "For me, I love it. It is the only real amusement one has in the country, or in town either. For example, George Mordaunt, and in return for your delicately expressed advice that I should mind my own business, look here,—that woman is an artful old trot, and she will stay on there, if she lives in the shoe-hole, (I wish she did) to keep the ear of her son, the Durham Ox, and make him bring Sir Jasper Meredith to book, and marry Mary. When she has done that she will go, not before."

"Where will she go then?" asked Ethel.

"To Sir Jasper Meredith," said Aunt Eleanor, "and I wish him joy of her. Now I have been talking sense so long that I wish some of you would open your mouths. *I* don't mind nonsense in season; but I'd give fifty pounds to the man who would set that house afire while that old trot was safe in the top story."

With this exaggerated statement of her sentiments, Miss Evans concluded. Let us look with less prejudiced eyes on the real state of things.

Of all mothers-in-law, living in the same house with their daughters, Mrs. Maynard was the most perfectly discreet. Eleanor Evans, who had the sense of ten ordinary men, saw why she stayed there—to keep her son's ear.

A very common character in fiction is the rich mother, who schemes and lies to get her daughter well married. She is generally held up to ridicule and scorn. She should not scheme and lie, of course, but what is the poor woman doing after all? only providing for her own flesh and blood, and very probably pushing with a great deal of actual money to get her girl well placed. The scheming dowager of comedy seems to me the most unreal character of all. In a vast majority of instances a mother only wishes to see her daughter well married, for pure love for her daughter, and for no selfish reason whatever. What benefit does a woman in high society get by marrying her daughter to a nobleman instead of another? Very little. She has the *entrée* to all houses to which people go: she can gain nothing there. She has as much money as she wants, and will have to part with some of it when her daughter marries. Now it seems to me, and to others also who know better, that the aims of a mother in making frantic efforts to secure a husband for her daughter are almost always sentimental, and rarely actually mercenary.

I like to see a good honest woman trying to get a rich good-humoured lad as a husband for her girl, at an expense of a couple of thousand pounds or so to herself. I think that she is doing her duty. I would give her every possible assistance. I would go so far as to take her into the tent or the supper-room, and give her chicken and wine, and say to her: "You silly old woman, why did you drive fifteen miles with your horses well tired last night, at Mrs. X——'s ball, in order that Eliza might meet Ferdinand (let us be genteel) there? You hunt him about too much. I have been round to the stable-yard just now, to get some friend's coachman to put my wife's pony to, and the very grooms are talking about it; and all the grooms and footmen in the county are there; the coachmen and butlers are in the servants' hall, and they will

all laugh at you for the way you are hunting this rich lad, who really loves your daughter, but whom you, with the best intentions, are doing your best to disgust."

That is the way I should talk to her, but then, you see, she wouldn't stand it.

Mrs. Maynard was no such mother as I have spoken about above; her objects were purely selfish. She cared little for an establishment for her daughter, provided she had no share in it. In fact, Miss Evans told her so, and Mrs. Maynard would not stand it for an instant.

Creeping up to her great scheme of confounding Sir Jasper Meredith, this good lady crept through many dirty ways. That most wonderful and powerful fiction, "Melmoth," is written to show, or to try to show, that no human being, under any circumstances, will make a compact with the Evil One and barter away his salvation. The author proves it or tries to prove it, by putting various groups of people into situations which it is horror to read, and nightmare to remember, always with the offer before them. He thinks that he has proved his thesis by making none of them do it, even in the most frightful extremity. Of course the idea of the book is great balderdash, though it is written with a literary skill which makes one remember it after many years. Of course no one ever gets the chance of selling themselves to the Devil; and the writer of that book has fortified his argument by making his characters almost preternaturally good; yet, had he taken characters of a lower order, I doubt if he would have proved his case so well. There are some people who would do it. Do I mean Mrs. Maynard? Of course not; no gentleman would so far forget himself as to say such a thing about a lady.

Still she would go a long way. Look at the splendid object before her. She, with her ox-like son, had been mistress and manager of a noble house,—a house of plenty and of influence for many years. She was called on to give up this, and she knew that she must give it up sooner or later. She was utterly vain, selfish, and extremely fond of good living; loving also *power* as well as Chaucer's lady did in a story which is far too cool to name here. All this was slipping away from her. Her son, though good-natured among men, was a very determined bully among women; and being a good fellow enough, did not at all approve of all his mother's ways and words.

In calculating the chances of the comet of 1858 hitting the earth and burning us, the most sensational of the astronomers told us that if it had come x^2 something nearer to us, we should have been disagreeably warm. In calculating chance in the same manner, one may say, confining oneself to arithmetic, and leaving mathematics alone as dangerous, that it was decimal ·333 against the tiny residuum which goes to make up 1,000, that if the Devil had appeared to Mrs. Maynard at this time, she would have traded.

For look at what this worthless woman had before her. On the one hand an entire loss of what she loved dearest,—power, prestige, and good living; and on the other hand the chance of being absolute and perfect mistress of Lawley Castle, the place of Sir Jasper Meredith, with an almost incalculable number of thousand pounds a year.

The woman was dishonest, moreover. She calculated that if she could bring Sir Jasper Meredith to book, and rule at Lawley for say six or seven years, she could "feather her nest." Meredith, good lad, was the best landlord going, for he let his farmers do as they liked, on the sole condition that the wages of the labourers should not fall below 13s.

The farmers would growl at that sometimes; but Sir Jasper, that honest little heap of bones, one day, in a fantastic mood, got one of his gamekeepers to get him a crow, and he nailed it up outside his porch. And he got the village painter to come and paint under it the words of Anne of Brittany:—"*Qui qu'on grogne ainsi sera. C'est mon plaisir.*" And when a farmer growled, Sir Jasper would take him out and show him the crow, and translate the French to him. And that farmer would go away and tell his acquaintances that there weren't a more resolute bit of stuff within sight of the Wrekin than that little cripple up at Lawley.

One farm only had fallen in since Sir Jasper's majority. There were fifty applicants for it. Young Brereton got it, at a lower bid than some others. Young Brereton met Aunt Eleanor at market at Shrewsbury, and she sold him some seed oats.

"Mind you cash up this day week, you know," said Aunt Eleanor. "I shall be here."

"Yes, miss. I have a kind landlord to start life with."

"Law, you may revel in plenty, man, and die rich, if you give him his own way. You leave his poor alone, and treat them well, and he will do well by you. You just oppress Christ's poor, and he'll *smash* you. Good morning. Don't forget the cash this day week."

Such was Aunt Eleanor's judgment about Sir Jasper Meredith. Mrs. Maynard's was far otherwise.

The man, if you could call him one, had to be carried about by valets and grooms. He had brains and education, they said; but what were brains and education to a miserable anatomy like him? He was not a marriageable man at all. If it were not for his money, he would not be worth looking after. He could not live. Mary would do as she told her. It was one of the most splendid chances ever seen. She, Mrs. Maynard, would be lady of Lawley to her dying day, for the title being extinct, she could easily make that heap of bones make over the whole property to her daughter, Lady Meredith. She could arrange for the killing of every deer in the park till she was eighty. She could arrange to have a haunch-day once a fortnight, and a dinner-party. She could take fines from the farmers under threats of raising their rents. She could do anything. It was really a splendid prospect. One thing only was in the way. Her son, young Maynard, was extremely resolute; and he distrusted his mother. She had shown him the letter which Sir Jasper had written so sillily for Roland's sake; and his only remark had been—"The little beggar! How dare he talk about marrying any woman; leave alone my sister."

This was by no means hopeful: she had to try something further.

It is, I am sure, disagreeable to me to write about very disagreeable things. I would be myself in favour of all sunshine. But it is not so in life; and in the slight caricature of life which we call fiction, very disagreeable things must be handled, if you are going to tell a story fairly out.

And the dreadfully disagreeable thing is this. Jim Mordaunt had not been so discreet with regard to Mildred Evans as he had represented himself to Sir Jasper Meredith at Bonn; and, unluckily, Mildred had not been so discreet as people believed her to have been. More had passed between those two than should have passed—a great deal more. Jim had written a frantic letter to Mildred, and Mildred had answered it. Jim had sent her back her letter, but she had not burnt it; but, like a kindly little fool, as she was, had tied it up with Jim's letter. The child

meant no harm. The child was fond of her husband, and fond of Jim also. She would have been glad if Jim had stayed in England, and was sorry he was gone. Yet she tied up her own letter with Jim's, and put them in her desk.

They were safe enough there; her desk was an inviolable thing. If she had only left them there, it would all have been well; but she would take them out; and her mother-in-law, peering over her shoulder, one day, saw Jim's handwriting. And the old lady robbed the girl's desk. And when the poor innocent child went to her desk next time, she found poor Jim's innocent letter to her gone, and her equally innocent letter to him, which was tied up with it, gone also. And it was so dreadful, that she just laid herself down on the hearth-rug, and moaned, and her husband found her there.

"What is the matter, my pretty one?" he said. "Get up, my darling, and let me carry you to bed. Pretty love! pretty love!"

"I want to lie here and die," she said. "I have done no wrong, but I want to die."

What could he do? It was a case which the mother-in-law could understand far better than he. The mother-in-law was called in, and took the case in hand with a will.

There was a terrible handle for her here. They would not get her out of this house in a hurry—not yet—not for ever, unless she chose. She could stay here until she chose to move to Sir Jasper Meredith's. However, this was the first thing in hand. She got her daughter-in-law upstairs, and attended to her. Poor Mildred was lost for a time; but at last she said—

"Mrs. Maynard, you have two letters. If my brothers were here, they would burn you alive."

"I have the letters; and I have not the least doubt that your brothers would do so."

"Are you going to show them to my husband?" said Mildred.

"Yes, my dear. I have no grievance against you; but I mean to show them to him, most certainly. I have purposes of my own to carry out. And—I shall show these letters."

"You mean it?"

"I most certainly mean it."

The effect of these words was frightful. The girl dashed out of her bed suddenly, and, opening her door, began crying for her aunt.

"Aunt Eleanor! Aunt Eleanor! they are all upon me. Come and help me!"

It was well for Mrs. Maynard that Aunt Eleanor was not by.

The poor little woman, you will understand, was as honest, and pure, and good as any woman could be. She was as innocent as Eddy, and very like him. But she was very fond of Jim, and she had written a very kind sisterly reply to his grossly indiscreet letter; and Mrs. Maynard had got hold of it, and, saving her presence, Maynard was a fool. And so the poor little thing ran out on the landing. Even now, if Mildred had got hold of her husband, and told him the plain truth, all would have gone well, I fancy; but Mrs. Maynard only told her son that the girl was hysterical, and kept them from a explanation.

It would have been better for him to have been at Oxford than at home, now.

Poor Mildred moped and moaned to herself. She never knew how much her mother-in-law had told her husband, and she dreaded him. At one time she fancied that he must know all; at another time that he knew only a part. But she could not trust him. That he knew something was evident; for his manner was altered. Though kind as ever, he was more staid and distant in his manner. And she, poor child, had no one to turn to—not one soul; for Miss Evans' visits to the Barton were ex-

tremely few and far between, and, to tell the truth, were far from successful when they did occur. Mrs. Maynard's very presence had such an extremely exasperating effect on her, that it made her show at her very worst. Ethel, her noble ally, begged her not to go there at all.

"You are not yourself with that woman, Miss Evans, any more than I am."

And so poor little Mildred was left alone.

What Mrs. Maynard had done was this. She had told her son that Mildred was in communication with James Mordaunt, and that she could prove it at any time. That she enclosed a letter to him to Roland. Maynard had a terrible dispute with his mother. He declared that, to begin with, Roland was utterly incapable of such baseness, and that she was out of her mind. The dispute was only ended by her showing him James's letter and Mildred's reply.

The poor young fellow was dazed and scared. If at this moment he had taken those two letters to his wife, and been kind to her about them; if he had taken them to young Mordaunt, to Aunt Eleanor, to any one, it would have been better for him and for Mildred. But he was not a wise youth. He was utterly inexperienced, and he brooded over it. To him it was absolutely ghastly that Jim, his old college mate, one of the great and famous four, had actually, as it seemed, tried to supplant him in the good graces of the very girl he had been, as it were, brought up to love. It was terrible. The wild side of poor Jim's character was almost unknown to him, for he had been to Eton instead of Gloucester, and he could not conceive it possible. Had it not been for his mother, he would never have known it. And if he in any way offended her, she would talk about it. And so there she was. And from this ground she opened her trenches on Sir Jasper Meredith, that very unhappy young gentleman.

She could not act against Sir Jasper. It must be Maynard, now head of the house. So she drew her first parallel, and it was about that unhappy expedition to Bonn.

Who was James Mordaunt's confidant? Jim. Who went after Jim to Bonn? Sir Jasper. Why? Ah! That might be known some day. Did Robert ever hear that horrible story of Jim's nearly murdering Eddy Evans? Heard something of it? *She* had the details. In short, her first parallel against the unhappy Sir Jasper was that he was James's friend: it was Jim, Jim, Jim, all day long.

Maynard was extremely kind to his wife, but they both saw that mutual confidence was at an end, and their wills being of about equal strength, they were afraid of one another. Yet one gush of silly sentimentality at any moment might have brought Mrs. Maynard's castle about her ears with an explanation. So I am happy to say she was very uncomfortable. And besides there was always that horrible Frankenstein, Miss Evans, in the background, who might make inquiries if her niece looked peaked, and ruin all. It was only Miss Evans's extreme dislike of her that prevented this happening. Mrs. Maynard knew this. She used to say, "That woman would take off her shoe in the mud, if she could box my ears with it." And upon my word, I should be sorry to say that Mrs. Maynard was altogether wrong.

And Roland and Jim were standing on the bow of their ship, and looking at fantastic palaces and temples. The sky was bright over head, and they were joyful with youth, friendship, and adventure. The land was green, and bright over-head, but beyond the foreground loomed a heavy, black, formless cloud, which the captain said was the coming monsoon.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

ROLAND and James were safe at Belpore, sleepily wondering at the wondrous temple which rises from the edge of the lake, and Eddy was on the broad sea following him, when there took place, at Pulverbatch Grange, a great corroborree or palaver, of which it now becomes necessary for me to give an account.

Miss Evans usually was very sweet tempered, and was accustomed to sleep the sleep of the just, particularly after a good day's market in Shrewsbury. She had had a good day's market that day. She had watched the prices, had in the "steamer," thrashed out three ricks, and sold at 60*s*., which, as she remarked, would do for those who had no rent to pay. "Why!" she said, as she was riding home on her cob alone, rubbing her nose, "it was only 76*s*. in Berlin in 1806: and *they* did well by it. I wish, though, that we had the prices of 1801 and 1812. Fancy getting 140*s*. What cottages I'd build, what schools I would have." She was a Radical, in her way, and a great professed admirer of the late Mr. Cobden. Still, given a farm of 700 acres, and 240, or thereabouts, of them in wheat every year, 140*s*. becomes very tempting. Few farmers are free-traders *in corn* in their hearts. They hanker after the flesh-pots of Egypt. They have been out-talked and out-argued, and are glad to hold their tongues; but any one who fancies that love for protection is dead will be deceiving himself utterly.

She, however, had done very well, as Eddy found when he got to Calcutta. For old Colonel Smith, H.E.I.C.S., now taken into her deepest confidence, had told her about the frightful extortions of the native money-lenders; so she dismissed large sums out of her income to Eddy. "They may cut his throat, and no doubt will," she said, "but he shan't go in debt." Indeed, Eddy never knew what to do with half the money she sent him.

The good bargain she had made for her wheat kept her in good humour the whole of her way home; but when she got home things began to get wrong with her. When she got to her own gate the cob wouldn't stand while she opened it. She had had that cob for five years, and every time she came home on him she had tried to open the gate from his back. He had never allowed such a proceeding for a single moment; he had nailed his colours to the mast about that. Yet she, on her side, had always tried with her usual resolution, and been beaten with her usual good temper. You may reckon that a woman riding about as much alone as she did, must have tried this matter,

to be within bounds, say once a day, one day with another, and 365 × 5 = 1,820, or something near it. And the cob had never let her do it, and she had never lost her temper, though she had failed every time; but had always slid off, opened the gate, and led him in. But on this occasion, the 1,821st, she decidedly lost her temper when she had to get off and lead the honest horse in. But she never showed it. She never showed her temper with her horses. They could not reply.

Again, with her oldest gardener. If she had told him once to move away the roller out of the ride when he had done with it, she had told him fifty times. But he was as obstinate as the cob, and there was the roller on one side of the ride, and the old gardener on the other; and the cob, being led, politely but firmly refused to pass either the one or the other. She lost her temper over this old man, but she never showed it, and he never knew it. For he also had no reply.

Her groom was ready for her, with bright brown face and honest eyes; she would have liked to lose her temper with him, but he gave her no opportunity, being ready; but if she had he would never have known it, for he also had no reply.

"I will *not* lose my temper any more to my people," she said to herself. "It is cowardly. They can't answer you. I have lost my temper too often with them, and they will cease loving me if I do. Not even with my maids. I'll keep my temper for those who can meet me on equal terms." And with this good resolution she rang the front door bell.

No answer.

She rang again.

No answer.

"Tiresome young hussies," she said; when there was a noise in the hall of scuffling, giggling and kissing, and the umbrella-stand was hurled headlong over.

"Oh! my dear young people," said Aunt Eleanor, with an emphasis which those inside would have little liked; "if you only *knew* about Somes' letter. But I will compromise. *I'll* keep *my* temper. You can't reply."

Immediately afterwards the door was opened by a very pretty girl, who was not by any means prepared to see her mistress home so soon from market, for, indeed, it was only half-past twelve. She was touzled, and her cap was all awry; as well it might be, for she had just been kissed in the hall by the footman, to whom she was engaged to be married. And if there is any harm in that, I hope sincerely that we are all guilty.

But Aunt Eleanor hated what she called scuffling. But she kept her temper, in reserve.

The girl said, "La! mum, I never thought it was you. I beg your pardon."

"Have you heard from your mother, Maria?" said Miss Evans, laying down her whip.

"Thank you, mum; yes, mum."

"And from your father?" said Miss Evans.

"Thank you, mum; yes, mum."

"Both well, I hope?" said Miss Evans.

"Quite well, thank you, mum," said the girl.

"Send my compliments to them, Maria, the next time you write. And ask them, in addition, whether, before they were married, they were in the habit of scuffling and kissing one another in the hall while their master or mistress was waiting to be let in? It is a mere matter of detail, but I should be glad to collect their sentiments on the subject."

The girl departed, horrified and dumb. But nothing came of it. Aunt Eleanor rang her bell twice, and it was answered by the footman with singular alacrity. To say that that young man shook in his shoes,

is to understate his frame of mind. No people are so terrible as those whom their inferiors know to be possessed of firmness and resolution, and yet who never *scold*. Their inferiors give them credit for a reserved power of scolding which is terrible to them. I have heard a story of a great and very quiet man, who once, after receiving an answer, turned on the offending servant, and said *sir* in such an awful manner, that the youhg man was taken ill, and the family physician had to remind his grace (I suppose it was the late Duke of Wellington) that the nerves of indoor male servants, from their want of physical exercise, were not so strong as those of a groom or a gardener. His grace, we will hope, never behaved with such want of consideration any more. Good John Leech's outrageously ridiculous picture of "Who dares kill Marius?" shows pretty much the same idea. Aunt Eleanor's young footman was thinking of Australia and California when he entered the room.

"Ho!" said Aunt Eleanor, "and so that is *you*, is it?"

"Yes, miss," said the terrified young man.

"I have four or five people coming to lunch," said Miss Evans. "Is everything ready?"

"Everything will be ready in twenty minutes, Miss."

"That is good. Have you cleaned all the plate?"

"Yes, miss. All as clean as you could possibly desire."

"*Then*," said Aunt Eleanor, turning and looking at him, "before the guests arrive, *just go into the hall and pick up the umbrella-stand!*"

He understood. He did it. And going to the kitchen told cook to mind and be smart, for that Miss Evans was in the horfullest wax ever he'd seen her.

When he announced the first arrival, "Mr. Somes," he did so with such emphasis and *empressement*, that he got another stare, and wished he was well out of it. Young Somes, the long-whiskered, gentlemanly young barrister, whom we have seen before, was left alone with Miss Evans, who received him in the kindest manner, much to his surprise.

"My dear soul," said Miss Evans, "you have broken my heart altogether."

"My dear madam," said young Somes, "what *could* I do? Our house has been made by yours. We are under the deepest obligations to your family. The whole case, as we have seen it, was sent to me, and I got the highest advice on it. The result was the letter you got the day before yesterday. I suppose that that advice has cost my father, and consequently myself, some £8,000. Believe, madam, that there are honest lawyers.

"Your house were always the best of friends, and the best of advisers," said Aunt Eleanor, fairly crying; "but it breaks my heart."

"Oh, no! no!" said the young fellow, "your heart is too big a one to be broken. No! no!"

"I thought your father would have fought," said Miss Evans.

"So he would, dear old gaby," said young Somes, laughing; "but I wouldn't have it. It is all my doing. Are you *very* angry with me?"

"I am not at all angry with you. I think you an excellent young man. Talk no more about it till the others come. What is the news in London? Come and sit by the fire."

"Well, madam, there is no great news. There has been news enough, and to spare lately. The peace will keep us talking for a time."

"What says public opinion?" said Miss Evans.

"Public opinion says that we were right in the last war, and that we were wrong. That we never exhibited our utter prostration so signally

as we have just done, and that we never before showed how infinitely stronger we were than ever we were before. That if it hadn't been for the French we should have been thrashed in a week; and if it hadn't been for the French we should have conquered and annexed the Crimea in a month. That the French did all the fighting, but that they ran away the moment they caught sight of a Russian. That the Russians were the most splendid troops we have ever met, and that they never would come near us unless their officers beat them on with the flat of their swords. That our commissariat broke down, and that no army was ever more magnificently furnished in the world——"

"Yes, yes!" said Miss Evans, laughing, "I know all that. But what do you young wiseacres say? You young barristers, with Parliament before you. What are you saying?"

Young Somes turned and looked at her. She was wonderfully handsome, and one of those quaint fancies—incipient brain-waves, I suppose—came into his head, and made him think that she would have made a splendid *sailor*. To put it strictly, there *was* a combination of forethought and reckless audacity which justified, to some extent, the young man's opinion.

"You are looking at me with pity," she said, sharply. "Tell me—India now?"

"We are out of one mess only to fall into a greater," said young Somes. "Why on earth, Miss Evans, did you ever let Mr. Edward go to India? Matters can't possibly go on as they are going. There are *plenty* of people who know what is going to happen."

"Reconquest," said Miss Evans. "Well, if he chooses to tie a sword round his waist, he had better be somewhere where he can use it. Here is Miss Mordaunt. Ethel, this is Mr. Somes."

"Compromise Somes," said Ethel, laughing. "No, really. You will catch it directly, sir; the Mordaunts are coming."

She was so brave, so frank, and so free, that young Somes fell in love with her on the spot, of which fact he informed his wife that evening; and his wife, after hearing his description of her, what she said, and what she did, applauded him highly, and immediately fell in love with Ethel herself by deputy.

The next arrivals were the elder and the younger Mordaunt.

"You are very late, you two," said Aunt Eleanor; "why could not you have come with Ethel?"

"We did," said the Squire; "we have been putting the horses up. How do, Somes?"

"Always some excuse," said Aunt Eleanor. Young Mordaunt rang the bell for lunch. "*Twice* I sold my corn, George Mordaunt, at sixty; not bad, I take it. How much have you lost on your farm this year?"

"I have recouped," said the Squire.

"Fiddle-de-dee!" said Aunt Eleanor; "you *think* you have. I should like to see your books. It ought to be written up over the door of every great school in England, in large letters, 'No gentleman can farm his own land, because he must send his bailiff to market, being too fine a gentleman to go himself.'"

"What would you write up in the ladies' schools, then?" said Squire Mordaunt.

"That a good woman is ten times as shrewd and twenty times as courteous as the best man of the lot; and that the remark don't apply to them in any way; for that they must be fools from the mere fact of allowing themselves to be sent to a ladies' school, as at present conducted, at all. A finishing establishment! Bah! I'd finish some of them. Lunch (to the footman). There is Ethel now, knows

nothing except what she has learnt from me; and who is there like Ethel, I would like to know? Why, nobody. She can play the piano, certainly, which I can't, and which I hate. Why couldn't she have been taught to play the fiddle? I love the fiddle, and it is the real woman's instrument. There is ten times the feminine delicacy of touch required in it which there is in the piano. Why, a *man* can play a piano better than any woman, in the same way as a man can fill a cart with gravel better than a woman, by superior strength of wrist —though I doubt even that, mind you.'

"But what woman has ever been a great violin-player, Eleanor?" said George Mordaunt.

"That is it. You men have voted it unladylike, and so they have never been taught. Look at Ethel's fingers and at her brother's, and tell me which is the likelier to make a good fiddle-player. You voted it unladylike, because it is the instrument you have chosen to dance to in pot-house brawls. I can conceive no other reason."

"My *dear* Eleanor," said Squire Mordaunt.

"There, I have talked out my talk, and here is lunch. Compromise Somes, sit next Miss Mordaunt. George, come and sit next to me. John," to the footman, "remove the covers. Have you picked up the umbrella stand?"

"Yes, Miss Evans."

"Then mind it stays up, will you?"

"Yes, Miss Evans."

Squire Mordaunt was very sorry to find Miss Evans in one of her quaintest and most reckless moods; but he consoled himself by thinking that she had possibly "blown her steam off." A very important discussion was about to come off, and he wished that she would have been more cool.

But she was cool enough when, the lunch being removed, they all sat together talking about weather, crops, fishing, grouse chances, the new coal-pit at Longnor, and many other things, each desiring that the other should begin. Squire Mordaunt was one of the most resolute men in Shropshire; but Aunt Eleanor was the first who came to business.

"Now, my dear people, we will talk business, and leave coal-pits alone. If we fight this matter, I shall require a coal-pit myself; and I know there is coal on my property. Deacon Magillivray is of the same opinion. I was walking with him under the south wall, by the moat, looking at the peaches, and I said, 'Deacon, there is coal under here;' and he said, 'Without doubt, if it pleases your leddyship to think so.' Now, that, coming from a long-headed Scotchman like him, amounts to a certainty I'd begin sinking to-morrow, only it would make such a mess in the garden at this time of year."

"Eleanor! Eleanor!" said Squire Mordaunt.

"Well, you had better talk nonsense than sit dumb-foundered and say nothing at all, as you are doing. Will you begin?"

"Mr. Somes," said Squire Mordaunt, "we have asked you, as a well-tried friend of the Evans' family, to meet us, equally well-tried friends of the family, to discuss the claim of this young adventurer, Allan Gray."

"I don't think he is an adventurer myself, sir," said young Somes; "I frankly confess that I believe his story."

"That looks bad," said old Mordaunt. "Will you lay the case before us?—not legally, or in legal language, but as you would to a common jury, and to a common jury at quarter sessions. I am, you know, chairman of quarter sessions; and you gentlemen put matters in one way before me and quite in another when you have a keen, wise, old judge sitting over you. Let

us have quarter sessions' statements, not assizes. Ethel, go and feed the chickens, old girl."

And Ethel went. Young Somes laughed, and proceeded—

"The late Captain Evans fell in love with Ellen, or Elsie Gray, who was at that time lady's-maid to Miss Eleanor Evans, and made his sentiments known to her, and those sentiments were reciprocated."

"That is all true," said Aunt Eleanor.

"Captain Evans went into the campaign of Waterloo, taking two of Miss Gray's brothers with him; one of whom was killed in that last ghastly imbroglio with the Old Guard, and one of whom returned."

A nod from Aunt Eleanor.

"On the eve of Waterloo the late Mrs. Evans, their mother, found the girl in an hysterical state, and in that state got the whole matter from her. Captain Evans had promised Miss Gray marriage. I can say, now that Miss Mordaunt is not in the room, that the late Mrs. Charles Evans was a model of virtue; and, even if she had not been, Captain Charles would have sooner cut off his right hand than have done her wrong."

"Yes, Charles was no rascal," said Aunt Eleanor, quietly; "we don't breed them in our family."

"Mrs. Evans the elder," said Somes, continuing, "by some happy or unhappy fatality, sent the girl out of the way to Carlisle, of all places in the world. The late Captain Evans, returning home from Waterloo with the one remaining brother, followed Miss Gray to Carlisle, taking her brother, a favourite and very dearly loved comrade, with him; so that no scandal could ever rest on his future wife's name. Brother and sister were alike willing. The brother took the sister over the Scotch border, where they were married in Scotch fashion. After which the brother was sent home, and Captain Evans wrote to his sister to tell her of the marriage, but entreating her to say nothing about it."

"Which, like a fool as she was," said Aunt Eleanor, "she did not."

"But Gray the soldier came back," continued Somes, "and like a wooden headed lad as he was, let out the fact that Captain Charles was at Carlisle with his sister. Suspicions arose, and Miss Evans' tongue was tied by what I very humbly think a mistaken notion of honour. Captain Charles lost nerve, dared not face his parents, and was sent to India under a cloud.

"Meanwhile the young soldier, Gray, seeing his betters making indiscreet matches, thought that imitation was the finest form of admiration. He came home, and made a singularly indiscreet match himself. Marriage is very catching, Mr. Mordaunt. When I married, five bosom friends of mine all went off in a heap."

"It did them credit, sir," said old Mordaunt.

"Well, young Gray had no earthly provision for his wife. And Captain Charles Evans had none for his. The soldier sent his wife to his mother, old Mrs. Gray, and the Captain's wife retreated to her, to be under the protection of Miss Evans, who is sitting with us now. And it so came about that both the innocent, pretty little souls had their babies wailing at their breasts at one and the same time."

"Quarter sessions! quarter sessions!" said Squire Mordaunt, blowing his nose; "you wouldn't try *that* before a judge, you know."

"*Wouldn't* I," said young Somes. "I'd put any piece of *real* sentiment before any of our judges without being afraid for a moment. They are only men. I have known one of them lie awake crying all night after he had pronounced sentence of death."

"Sir, we must get on. The facts of the case, as I make them out, are

these. The soldier's child died, and Captain Charles Evans' child lived. These children were changed, the dead for the living. Follow me, please, because probabilities are so extremely in favour of their case, that I confess I looked on it favourably from the first.

"We have two young women, both confined at the same, or nearly the same time.

"Mrs. Charles Evans, what was her position? She was deserted, lost, ruined, and degraded, on the very estate where she had been brought up. Who was in the possession of her secret, of the secret that she was actually married? Only two people, Eleanor Evans and Phyllis Myrtle. And neither of them spoke. The one from a sense of chivalrous honour towards her brother, the other from a dim and distant chance of making money from her secret."

Aunt Eleanor looked up deadly pale, and she said, "You see a lie is a lie, and brings its consequences. Go on, young Somes; you are a good young man. That lie of mine will be indirectly my ruin. For if I had spoken out, don't you see, Roland's position would have been different in some way, some inappreciable way, and he might not have gone to India. And so Eddy would not have gone. I hope God will not deal too hardly with Eddy for my fault."

Young Somes, with his solemn white face, looked steadily at her, as at a fact to be respectfully studied, saying to himself, "I don't mind a Sorites, but I don't like a dozen in a heap. That woman's conclusions are logical enough, but how the deuce does she get at them so quick. Well, I must stick to my original creed, that I am a thundering fool, but will try to be something better. That old woman is cleverer than I am."

"Now, sir, not only Mrs. Gray and Mrs. Phyllis Myrtle are prepared to swear that the child which died was the soldier's child, and the child which lived was Captain Evans', but they got a declaration from the mother that such was the case, and I honestly believe it to be the case myself. Mrs. Gray knew nothing whatever of her daughter's marriage; had she, she would have urged these claims before. She believed him to be the illegitimate son of Captain Evans by her daughter. She conceived, and I think rightly, that he would have better chance of good treatment from a family so extremely scrupulous as the Evanses, if he came before the world as an honestly born child, with an indirect claim on the family, in consequence of the wrong that had been done her daughter, than if he came to them in the shape of an illegitimate child, the standing disgrace of the house. For there have been none such among the Evanses within human memory. Mrs. Gray persuaded the other two women to consent, for she is a woman of great force of character; and the thing was done.

"So you *think*," said Squire Mordaunt. "Are you going to compromise an old woman's tale like *this*?"

"Wait, sir, if you please," said young Somes. "I have seen the deposition of the soldier Gray's wife, and it is very awkward. You can't tell what a jury would do with it. I now begin to speak of Mrs. Phyllis Myrtle. Mrs. Myrtle, who was in and about during all this, was all the time in possession of the fact that Captain Evans had honourably married Miss Gray in Scotland. The poor girl had given her time and place, and the names of the witnesses, because——"

"Go on," said Aunt Eleanor; "I can stand it."

"Because she would like some one to know it besides Miss Evans. It was utterly base and ungrateful of her, I know, but she did it. She told Mrs. Myrtle."

"I know she did," said Aunt Eleanor. "Poor little dear, we loved

one another well. She must have consented to this, though."

"Of that I know nothing; of the whole conspiracy we can know but little. Still here remains the fact. These two women are prepared to swear to their conspiracy and take the consequences, and meanwhile, Mrs. Maynard, of the Barton, has known the whole business from one end to another for a considerable time, and is expressing a strong desire to unburden her mind of its guilty secret."

"*That* woman!" said Aunt Eleanor.

"The very same, madam. Do you remember who Mrs. Myrtle *was?*"

"Certainly," said Aunt Eleanor. "Why, she was that woman's nurse!"

"*Ex*-actly, said young Somes; and Mrs. Myrtle, totally unable to keep a secret, yet loves having the power of one. Had she let out her secret to Mrs. Gray, they would have moved years ago. But she must tell the whole story to some one, and she told it to Mrs. Maynard. Why did she not tell it to Mrs. Gray? Because she *hated* Mrs. Gray. Mrs. Gray bullied her, and annoyed her. They would no more mix than vinegar and oil. This wretched, tipsy old woman, knew the whole truth. She admitted one half of it to Miss Evans (that about the marriage) and the other half to Mrs. Gray (that about changing the children). So Mrs. Gray knew one half and Miss Evans the other. But she went off and told the story in its entirety to Mrs. Maynard. Mrs. Maynard has in her possession at this moment the declaration of the woman Gray, and the names of the witnesses to Charles Evans' marriage. That is the reason, Miss Evans, why she so furiously opposed a match between her daughter and Mr. Roland. That is why Mr. Roland is in India.

"Ho!" said Aunt Eleanor, "and so that is the way the lie has fallen from heaven on my head. So *that* is the reason why Roland has gone to India, and Eddy has followed him. *I'll just ride over and see that woman to-morrow.*"

Why did I put that in italics? Because it was *said* in italics. In italics so low, so fierce, and so threatening, that Squire Mordaunt said, "Eleanor, *be quiet*;" and she only folded her hands and was dumb.

"Well, sir," continued young Somes, "to be short, young Gray, or we should rather say, if my advice is taken, Evans, took his grandmother into his house in London, as a dutiful godson should; and she, a fierce, resolute, wild, godless old tiger, as she is, led him a fearful life. His ways were not her ways, and she hated him for his precise religionism, and still more because she believed that he was the fruit of an action by which her daughter had been unutterably wronged. He, as a man of the most true and high nobility ——"

"*What* did you say?" asked Squire Mordaunt, aghast.

"He, as one of the most splendid and noble young fellows I have ever met," continued Somes, "bore with her and her ways, though she was a thorn in the flesh to him. I can conceive of no fate worse than his was. He, with every high and noble instinct in his head and his heart, devoting himself to God and to God's poor night and day, to be locked up in the same small house with a godless old fury like that! He is a Dissenter, sir—I a very High Churchman; but when I look at that man's life, sir, I blush for my own."

He blushed certainly, but it was with warmth, not with shame. Aunt Eleanor said, "He is quite right, George. It is all true;" and young Somes went on.

"This old Mrs. Gray, bored to death in Camden Town; not seeking excitement in stimulants (she has too much vitality for that—she is as sober as a Mussulman, but as fierce as an Arsascide), thought she would like to have

Mrs. Myrtle to come and gossip with her. And Mrs. Myrtle came, and in her drink let the whole matter out to Mrs. Gray from beginning to end."

"I need not tell you that Allan Gray moved in the matter at once. The good old house which backs his claim wavered about it for a little, but took it up in the end. They have had more trouble with him than ever we shall, if we treat him wisely and well.

"What they know more than we do I can't say; but they were perfectly prepared to go on, until Allan Gray, against their wishes, proposed a compromise. and I think that we should meet him."

"It seems to me a mere old woman's story," said Squire Mordaunt.

"It does not seem so to others," said young Somes. "The other house think it a very good one. *I* think it a good one."

"But we could smash these two old trots for conspiracy," said Squire Mordaunt.

"And Miss Evans with them, if they were vindictive, possibly. Yes, you might get that satisfaction for about £8,000, if you cared to do it.

'You are rather cool, young Somes," said the younger Mordaunt.

"Some one must be, young Mordaunt," he replied. "Look here; you would employ us, and the money is all out of my father's pocket. The governor would fight; I won't let him. Is that being disinterested or not?"

"It certainly is, sir," said old Mor daunt, emphatically. "But what compromise is proposed?"

"Recognition as head of the house, and a rent-charge of £1,000 a year for his lifetime. All further claims on the estate to be abandoned. There."

Dead silence.

Old and young Mordaunt were debating wildly whether it was too much or too little, and whether they ought to advise compromise at all. But Aunt Eleanor, with her pocket-handkerchief before her face, hit, unwomanlike, the nail on the head.

"Supposing that this monstrous compromise was accepted, Mr. Somes, there will, I suppose, be no future stipulation in it in case of his marriage?"

Somes blushed up scarlet. "Madam, there is not the slightest probability of his marrying. I think you know that as well as I. But there is no further stipulation."

"You have been seeing a good deal of him, then," said Aunt Eleanor.

"Yes, madam, a good deal; and the more I see of him the more I like him. He might have made harder terms than these."

"Well," said Squire Mordaunt, "all that remains to be done is to send his terms to India to Roland. That will take nearly four months. Meanwhile?"

"Meanwhile, are you going to advise Roland to compromise?" said young Somes.

"*Most certainly*, on these terms," said Squire Mordaunt.

"Then it is as good as settled," said Somes. "Will you receive him?"

"Not as an Evans. I will *call* him Evans, but I don't recognize his right until Roland has done so."

"He is coming down here," said Somes, "to put you all to rights. However, you will see him fast enough Good bye."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"CORNET MORDAUNT is ordered to attend on Colonel Cordery immediately after to-morrow morning's parade."

"What *have* you been up to, Jemmy?" said Roland.

"Well, I haven't been up to anything in particular." said James.

"Old boy, *do* be more careful.

There is no better fellow in the world than you, and you are a splendid officer. *Can't* you leave off this everlasting tomfoolery? Will you ever be out of a scrape? What is the matter now?"

"I don't know," said Jim. "Not in particular."

"What did you do to-day?" asked Roland.

"Well, I got up and was at parade, and I was late; and so was the drummer, And I got on the drummer's horse in a hurry, and told him to get on mine, which he wasn't fool enough to do. And, being on his horse, I thought I would try to improve my mind by drumming; but I could not come it, and kicked up a devil of a row. Then my syce brought my horse, and I was in time; but the drummer was late, and caught it. Do you think it is that?"

Roland groaned. "What did you do next?"

"Well, I went to the bath; and I ducked the doctor."

"Did he get angry?" asked Roland.

"Didn't he! My eye! Such a wax. Wanted to know if he was an officer and a gentleman, and I told him no; and sent his bald old head under again. *I'll* physic him."

"What did you do then?" said Roland, in despair.

"Well, I looked in to see how the judge was getting on in his court."

"Did you make a fool of yourself *there?*" asked Roland.

"No; I only went in to study the language, and I sat and looked at him; nothing more, I give you my word of honour. But he got in a wax about it, and went so far as to ask me whether he was to be insulted by military subalterns in his own court."

"What did you say?"

"I don't exactly remember," said Jim. "But it was something that made him waxier than ever."

"Well, what did you do next?" asked Roland.

"Well, I went and knocked up the Nawab."

"Which Nawab?"

"He of Belpore."

"That is right," said Roland, eagerly. "For heaven's sake have nothing to do with the Rajah of Bethoor. Don't be seen speaking to him. He is an utterly unsafe man. W—— never lets him into his house. Will you be serious for a moment, James?"

"Yes, if you ain't more."

"I *know*," said Roland, "that that man had the lines fired the other night when W—— was dining at the Residency, with a view of getting the keys of the magazine, where he pretended to believe that the fire-engine was. Mrs. W—— (bless her noble soul!) refused to give them up, and ran in the darkness, mud and rain towards the Residency, and luckily met two of the conductors, who informed her that the fire-engine was not kept in the magazine at all. That man is a traitor and a scoundrel."*

"The dirty sweep!" said Jim. "I'll get a pea-shooter, and the Nawab and I will give him a volley from the Nawab's drag the next time we pass his barouche."

"On the other hand," continued Roland, "the Nawab is a most respectable and excellent young man, a thoroughly noble and excellent young Indian gentleman. He is absurd sometimes in his imitation of English manners, but he is thoroughly *good*. You should try to regulate his Anglo-mania, my dear Jim. He is apt to make himself absurd by it. I fear you encourage him to be foolish. Have you and he been at any particular folly to-day?"

"No," drawled Jim. "I found him going out in his drag, Cutcherry's

* This fact about Nana Sahib is actually true.

old coach, you know, with two Australians for wheelers, and two imported black Flemish mares for leaders. And, as Edie Ochiltree says, he behoved to drive. But I asked him to let me drive, and he was pleased at the idea of getting a lesson at it. And as we drove, I told him that he would never feel the full pleasure of four-in-hand driving until he had had a good spill, and he was perfectly game; and so I told him that his black Flemish leaders were in reality hearse-horses, used only for funerals in England, and that they would always bolt into a burial-ground. He is thoroughly plucky, and at once proposed that we should cross the nullah and try them past the cemetery. And when we came to the cemetery, I put the leaders at the wall, and we came to everlasting grief, to his immense delight."

"I wish you would not do such things," said Roland, impatiently.

"My dear Roley, he liked it. I was shot on to a soft grave, and he fell dexterously atop of me. I assure you he is charmed. As soon as the fragments of the drag are got together, he will ask me to do it again, which I certainly shall. He considers it as a phase in our ruder national sports. He is going to get up a prize-fight."

The interview with the Colonel was not quite so satisfactory.

"Mordaunt," said the Colonel, very kindly, "we are all very fond of you, and should be very loth to lose you."

"Now, I know what is coming," thought Jim. "K—— all over. I shall be head-mastered till I am dead, I believe. I wish he would let me off with lines. The moonshee would do them. I wonder what is up?"

"About you, Mordaunt," said the Colonel, "I have to say that a brighter, brisker, more promising young officer don't exist."

"This is getting worse and worse," thought Jim. "I know this style of thing."

"I have a strong personal feeling towards you myself. You are popular among your brother officers; your men like you extremely. You are learning your duty admirably, and I have no fault to find in that way with you."

"This means expulsion from the British army, if I know anything of being sent up to head-master, and I ought to," thought Jim.

"*But*," continued the Colonel, "there are parts of your conduct which will most certainly entail your retirement from the regiment, if not from the army altogether, unless they are immediately mended. Court-martials have been held for half of what you have done, sir. Do you suppose for a moment, sir, that the British rule in India can be kept up, if officers in the British army come out from balls at the Residency at four o'clock in the morning, seize the palanquin of the Judge's lady, induce a not very sober collector to get into it, run away with it into the bottom of a nullah, and turn it upside down, with the collector inside?"

"Hang it all," thought Jim. Then aloud,—"I didn't know it was *her* palanquin, sir; and Phipps and I apologized afterwards."

"Then the other fellow *was* Phipps," said the Colonel. Whereupon Jim grew sulky, fierce, and silent, cursing his tongue.

"Of this singular friendship of yours with the Nawab, I decline to say anything. Such intimacy with native princes, however estimable, is always considered highly indiscreet, more especially in the case of king's officers. However, with regard to that particular matter, I refuse to say one single word further than I think you are utterly lowering yourself by it, and had I ever dreamed that such a friendship would have taken place, I

would never have admitted you into the regiment."

"I have sat out heavier wiggings than this, sir," said Jim, suddenly, which made the Colonel think him a strange young man, as indeed he was. But the Colonel had taken up his ground, and was not to be diverted.

"I therefore say nothing of your friendship for the Nawab. I even pass over your yesterday's extraordinary performances, enough for several court-martials; but on one point I particularly request an explanation —the extraordinary familiarity which you are showing to your moonshee."

Jim was utterly taken aback at this accusation. His tomfooleries were so innumerable that he felt guilty on all points. But this one! He stammered out, "What, old Baghobahar?"

"Yes," said the Colonel. "Your behaviour to that old man is reported to me as something I have never heard of out of Bedlam. They say that you have him in your room for hours together, and that you sit him up at one end, and lie in your hammock and look at him."

"He is a most respectable old man, sir," said Jim, blushing scarlet. "We study the language together."

"I have no doubt of it," said the Colonel, kindly. "And now to conclude, my dear lad. You are one of the best and most honest lads that ever stepped, but *do* try to curb this fantastic behaviour. *I*, as a man of the world, and an old officer, have seen plenty of it, and know that it is only the outcome of the intense vitality and vivacity of our nation, a handful of whom can keep these millions in order. But curb it here. It does us ill service among these solemn Asiatics, who have nearly lost the art of laughter with their cruel ritualisms and their life-long struggle to live. In the most successful of your tomfooleries did you ever see a low-caste man laugh at you?"

"Why no, sir."

"Believe me, no. I am young enough yet to go on a frolic with you, anywhere but here. Be more dignified, my boy. Don't play the fool. There, cut away, you have had your wigging. You are a good young man, and a good officer. Don't play the fool any more; and, if you continue your friendship with the Nawab, upset his coach somewhere else than in a grave-yard."

"Do you know, sir," said Jim, standing up erect and solemn before him, "that you are a very kind and good man, and that I would go to the devil after you?"

"That presupposes my going to the devil first, my good lad," said the Colonel, laughing; "which is a thing I don't mean to do. Come, are you going to be good?"

"I don't think so," said Jim. "I never was. I'll be as good as I can. Am I to cut the Nawab?"

"Certainly not," said the Colonel; "but don't make a fool of him."

"Am I to cut my moonshee?" asked the incorrigible Jim.

"There, get out of this, do," said the Colonel. "I do believe that K——'s boys remain boys till they are eighty. All except Evans, who seems to have been born when he was ninety." And so Jim departed.

"I'd go to *somewhere* after that fellow," he said to Roland. "But I've *caught* it," and he offered no further explanation. So Roland left him alone.

The Moonshee business, which the Colonel thought to be the worst of all poor Jim's business, even including that of the judge's lady's palanquin and the collector, must be explained.

It was absolutely necessary that Jim, to go the way King Roland wished him to go, towards staff promotion, must learn Hindustani at least. And Jim admitted the fact.

So Roland, who had quickly the ear of every officer on the station, cast about for the very cleverest moonshee procurable. And that moonshee was old Baghobahar, and he was incontinently told to attend to Jim, and instruct him in Hindustani.

And so this happened to Jim. He was lying on a sofa, singing "Barbara Allen" at the top of his voice, and looking out at the scalding sunshine beyond, when there entered to him an aged man, who salaamed and came towards him. And Jim was stricken dumb.

Out of that depth of humour, which the English and Scotch have in common, came a voice which told him that this was *the* old man. Jim had, like most young men of his fresh, wildish constitution, and good disposition, loved old men, for their pretty gentle ways, and their complacent politeness. But here, in India, appeared to him the old man of all old men. The ideal of all ideals. And Jim arose and took him to his bosom; that is to say, he salaamed to him again, and made him sit down.

From that moment the mere contemplation of this aged Hindoo gave the profoundest satisfaction to Jim, He was content to lie on his sofa and look at him.

He was a little odd man, very old, with a very dark complexion, snow-white hair and beard, and large spectacles; whenever Jim could get that old man cocked up before him, with his spectacles on, his soul was satisfied. Roland called him fool, but Eddy was as great a fool about the old man as Jim.

There the old man used to sit, hour after hour, with his heels tucked under him, (not cross-legged), reading Hindustani to Jim. And there Jim would lie, smoking and listening, never weary in the contemplation of *his* old man. He would have liked to *buy* that old man, had it been possible. He relieved his mind by giving him handfuls of new rupees, which, however, were generally declined by the quaint old Hindoo gentleman.

Roland looked into Jim's bungalow one day, and watched them. The old man was cocked up at the end of the room, reading sententiously. Jim lay smoking and contemplating his idol. "Is he mad?" said Roland. "Not a bit, my dear Roland; but he has got what you have not, 'humour.'"

The other object of contemplation in which Jim most delighted, was the Nawab of Belpore, or of "Baal Peor," as Jim delighted to call him, not knowing that he was merely reproducing exactly the same words. This grand young Indian prince was a perpetual source of delight to Jim. And after Jim had spilt him over the churchyard wall, given him fifty at billiards and beaten him, pitched his best wrestler on the back of his head, and ridden his worst buck-jumping Australian for him, the kindly, honest young Nawab was as fond of contemplating Jim, as Jim was of contemplating him.

These friendships are extremely rare. But this was a real one. I believe that they will be as rare in future. Our people have dropped the horrid word "nigger" now. Fancy calling Scindiah, for instance, a "nigger!" Can one wonder at what happened?

Do they love us yet? It is hard to say. But we are doing our duty, and we must hope that they will get as far as that when they see what we have done for them. Social impertinences had much to do with one phase of the Indian Mutiny. The most courteous people in the world get sick in time of continual insults. To a certain kind of fantastically radical mind, like poor Jim's, social distinctions are impossible. His moonshee and his Nawab were new and astounding facts to him, but he considered them quite in the light of

equals, a point of view which his good Colonel, or Roland, could never be brought to.

Poor Jim had not the least discretion in speech, though a great deal in judgment. He was lying one day with his book before him, pretending to follow his moonshee, who was reading aloud to him, but was in reality contemplating that great moonshee, when there was a scuffling of runners, and a carriage drew up opposite his door.

He was in hopes that it was his Nawab, but a native servant came in, and said that it was the Rajah of Bethoor.

"Tell him to go to hell," said Jim, lying back on his sofa. "Go on, Baghobahar."

The frightened servant departed trembling. Immediately after a sergeant of his own company came in and said, "If you please, sir, the Rajah of Bethoor is at the door."

"That rascal has not given my message then," said Jim. "Jones, you go out and give it. Tell him to go to hell." And the sergeant went out and gave some sort of message, not possibly the same as Jim's, but sufficiently strong to prevent his ever coming again.

And the moonshee took off his spectacles, wiped them, looked at Jim with supreme satisfaction, put them on again, and said: "I have now to call the Sahib's attention to the fact that there are twelve months in the year, consisting on an average of thirty-one days, each of twenty-four hours. We now enter the ninth month of the contemplations of the Fakeer Dhalblat of Ferosepore."

And Jim said, "Cut away, old man."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

So the Colonel and Roland let Jim go his own quaint way with his Nawab and his moonshee, and went their own. Before many months were over, it became apparent that Jim was exercising an immense influence over the Nawab. The drag was discontinued; he was taught to ride. His Royal Highness likewise left off dressing himself in puce-coloured velvet and gold, white loose trousers, and patent-leather pumps, and came out in a neat costume, between English and Asiatic. He likewise smoked less and rode harder, and, what is more, liked it.

"I told you, Colonel," said Roland, "that there was good in him. He will make a man of that Nawab."

"He is a queer fellow," said the Colonel; "as mad as a hatter; but I suppose we must leave him alone. He is certainly making a gentleman out of the Nawab."

"What are the Nawab's antecedents?" asked Roland.

"Same as the rest of them," said the Colonel, yawning. "Married when he was twelve, and four times since. Now twenty-three. Spent all his time learning European languages and manners, and flying kites for a recreation, till a couple of years ago, when he took up with a kind of Orleans Anglomania. I dare say Mordaunt will make something of him. What is this building going on at his palace? That is a new kick."

"Jim and he are studying fortification together," said Roland, "and they are reducing it to practice."

"Well, he is a safe man," said the Colonel. "He might spend his money worse. I will go and have a look at these two fools. By the by, Evans——"

"Yes, sir."

"You speak French?"

"Yes, sir,"

And the conversation, until Roland's departure, was carried on in that language, which had the very strange effect of causing the punkah over their heads to go faster and faster, as though with exasperation. The Colonel noticed it, and laughed,

"I wish you would go out and stick a pig for me, to-morrow."

The Colonel looked at him so very straight that Roland only looked back again, and said—

"Yes, sir."

"Between this and Delhi it is only a hundred and forty miles."

"And not a dozen pigs in the distance," said Roland. "Yes, sir."

"And put this cypher in your pocket, and let your horse run away; and let him run away as far as Jellapore, where they will remount you; and then let *that* horse run away as far as Bugapore, and they will give you a fresh horse there; and let him run away with you as far as Delhi; and give that cypher into L——'s own hands."

"I see, sir."

"If you are assassinated, I will see after your affairs. I don't *think* you will be, if you can get safe to Jellapore. Don't come back alone, but come with the 201st."

"I will obey your instructions, sir. I am very much obliged to you for this mark of confidence."

"Whoy! For the matter of that, I always pick out the best man for a dangerous and secret service with no possible chance of reward attaching to it. The compliment is quite mutual, I assure you. Ride in the open as much as possible till you are past Jellapore."

"Are our communications threatened already, sir?" asked Roland.

"I suppose that is more my business than yours, is it not?" said the Colonel, quietly. "What you have to do is to obey orders. Go to bed now, and slip off before day with a hog-spear. Do as you are told."

And Roland nodded, and turned to the door, when the Colonel called him back.

"Come, young man, I will trust you as far as this. They have learnt our cypher, and you are the first bearer of a new one."

"Are they going to move yet, sir?"

"Who knows? Who cares? It will all be the same. What was done before can be done again. Be careful of yourself. You are the best man I have, or I should not have sent you on this dangerous errand. You know, of course, that you will get no credit by it."

"Good evening, sir," said Roland, in *English*, laughing.

"Good evening, Evans," said the Colonel, also in that language. "Mind you are not late for parade."

And the Colonel went out into the verandah, and pleased himself by staring steadily at the punkah wallah, who had pulled the string so violently when he and Roland began to talk French.

And Roland went away to his errand; and before day broke, on his best Australian, dressed in the old Shropshire hunting-breeches and boots, with a hog-spear in his hand, he had put a good twenty miles between him and Belpore.

These were the first days of it, when those who warned were not listened to. The end was not yet by any means.

On the very morning on which Roland had so innocently cantered out of Belpore with a hog-spear, and two running syces, blown and distanced very soon by the pace of his Clarence River bred Australian horse—on this very morning Jim was lying on his sofa, contemplating his beloved moonshee with greater satisfaction than ever The moonshee had long before finished the "Contemplations of Dhalblat," and indeed the modern Hindustani comedy of "Rumsi Door, the Cloth-Merchant of Jellalabad," a work of great art, directed against the Mahomedans, but which has fallen dead in England, in spite of Captain Rollingstone's *most spirited translation*. The moonshee had finished these two on Jim's head, and was be-

ginning with the "Dhollery-bagh; or, Garden of Rupees" (a poor piece as to plot, but admirable for its Anglicised Hindustani). He was propped up on his haunches at one end of the room, and Jim was lying on his sofa at the other, contemplating him, and smoking.

The old moonshee's knees were up to his nose, and his wise, good old face looked at Jim from between them. He adjusted his great round spectacles, and began—

"It now becomes my duty to call the attention of the sahib to the ravages and dacoitees which his language has committed on mine," when a voice in the doorway said—

"Come, old man, don't talk about dacoitee. If we have altered your language for the better, we have at least rendered it possible for you to know the finest literature which the world has ever seen."

And Jim, rising in astonishment, saw the Colonel before him.

The moonshee got off his seat, shut up his book with his spectacles in it, and salaamed. The Colonel said, hurriedly—

"Sit still, Mordaunt. Moonshee, go out and send those men away, and then come back to us."

And the old man did so with rapidity and dexterity,

Jim, sitting upon his sofa, in his shirt and trousers, was a little dazed by these very sudden proceedings. Before he had time to say a few common-places to the Colonel, the punkah was stopped, and the Colonel was sitting on one side of him and the old moonshee standing on the other.

"Sit down," said the Colonel, "and speak low." And the moonshee sat down with a bow.

"James Mordaunt," said the Colonel, *in French*, "I am a man who never refused the combat or the retractation where I thought either the one or the other thing was in any way necessary. I owe you the apology at the present. I owe you the apology because I doubted, on a recent occasion, the capability possessed by you of selecting acquaintances with discrimination."

Jim said, in such French as he had got at Gloucester, "that he was profoundly penetrated with the sentiments of Colonel the Commandant"; and he couldn't have done better if he had tried.

"But you have shown—you—that you have power of selection enormously. I believed for a long time that you were vain and foolish; that your old friend, the moonshee, was rascal; and, again, old babbler; and, again, spy; and again, once more, betrayer of deposed trusts; but I have changed all these opinions. I have disclosed the very bottom of my heart to you on this business; and now we will speak English."

Jim, thinking it was the best thing they could do, if they wanted to talk sense, acquiesced without a murmur. And he was wondering idly how the French got through their business with such extremely florid language, when the Colonel began in his native tongue.

"That old man who sits beside you has rendered service to the Queen's Government which shall not be forgotten."

"Sahib," said the old man, "I desire nothing, take nothing, and will accept nothing. I think British rule is good for India, and my three boys have died for you. I have sown and I will reap. It would be strange, I think, that a father who has lost three sons in a cause should turn against it at last."

"There spoke a *man*," said Jim, suddenly and loudly. "There spoke a man, Colonel. *I* know a man when I see him. You go into boat-racing, and you'll be able to do the same."

"Do you know what he has done?" said the Colonel.

"No," said Jim, "*I* don't know anything about him, except that I spotted him for a gentleman, and that he sits at one end of the room, and reads that balderdash, and I sit at the other and look at him. Whatever he has done is no harm."

"He has refused every offer of the Rajah of Bethoor, and has discovered for us that our cypher was discovered, and our despatches mutilated, and he refuses reward."

"It was little enough to do, sir," said the old moonshee. "Peace for India means merely a strong British Government. Ah, you don't remember the *old* days. I take my leave," and he went.

They watched him go. To Jim he had been a friend, and yet he had been a subject of an almost absurd contemplation. An abnormal, and consequently, to Jim's mind, as some sort an *absurd* creature. He was absurd in Jim's eyes no longer now; Jim knew, after this story of the Colonel's, why he had loved the old man instinctively, and without knowing it. The quaint, fantastic old moonshee was a very noble person; Jim was a judge of men as far as his training went, and he had judged this good old man as honest from the first moment he saw him. And as he and the Colonel watched the good old man go fluttering down the sandy road towards the nullah and the patch of jungle beyond, Jim said to the Colonel, "There goes a good and honest man, sir," and the Colonel said, "You are right. Now I want to go with you to the Nawab."

Let us follow the old Moonshee first. With his books at his breast, in fluttering white robes, he went down the long broad sandy road towards the nullah, towards the patch of dark green jungle beyond, towards his poor little bungalow, now empty for ever.

He had been married many times, this quaint old man, but all his wives were dead, and he was all alone. Daughters he had alive, but dead to him in zenanas. He had thought and read, this quaint old man, until he believed that he had thought through all recorded knowledge, and his thoughts had always been towards one solitary point—the good of India. He was old enough to remember when he had resisted the British invasion in arms in his own person. But afterwards he had seen more and more hope in the British, and he had sent three sons to die for us. He saw more chances for good, day after day, in the British rule, and day by day he was strenuous to uphold it. Lastly, there had come to him a young man, also of the Indo-Germanic race, whom he chose to believe was the image of one of his own sons, and that young man was singularly enough Jim Mordaunt.

It is not to be supposed that Jim and he entirely confined themselves to Hindustani. They had a few talks together, and James had altered the old man's opinions with regard to the Nawab of Belpore, whom he had always considered as a young man without worth. Jim had altered his opinion somewhat. Jim thought highly of the Nawab; and the old moonshee was determined to make a greater acquaintance with the Nawab, and see whether, after all, there *was* anything to be made of an Indian gentleman.

He believed so far in the transmigration of souls as to believe that our poor Jim from Shropshire was his own son. He had conveyed all his little wealth to him. But leaving alone this superstition, there was more sense and reason under the turban of that old moonshee than there is under ninety-nine out of every hundred beaver hats in England.

When he turned the corner and lost sight of Jim's bungalow, he

turned, and on his way gave his blessing to Jim. Then he crossed the nullah and came beside the patch of jungle which lay between Jim's bungalow and his.

The good old man was turning all politics over in his head when he arrived here. There were few passing on the road, and the sand was heavy on his feet. At once, within the jungle, he heard the low wail of an infant. "It is a case of exposure," he said. "I will go and pick it up. I have none of my own; it may live to serve Hindustan."

And so the good old man, parting the thick heavy green leaves, left the sandy track, and turned into the jungle on his errand of mercy after the wailing infant.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE Nawab was excessively fond of billiards, but did not play well by any means. He had therefore looked round for a moonshee for billiards, as it was not very agreeable to be always beaten by Jim. And he had discovered one. Let us see who he was, and how he found himself in *this* queer out-of-the-way business.

How quaint this bringing together of England and India is! The great Squire Todhunter, of Cambridgeshire, rode eighteen stone, and, consequently, had to be horsed at the expense of nearly five hundred pounds. Now the squire was a saving and discreet man, and he did not like his horses trashed unnecessarily. Consequently, in choosing a second horseman, he looked for the qualities of extreme smallness and extreme cleverness. He was very particular about this; and one day he got a letter from Sir Gregory Dowes, to say that he had found him a treasure. The treasure was sent over for inspection, and into Squire Todhunter's library came one of the strangest little men the squire had ever seen—a handsome l ttle lad, weighing six stone, and four feet high, very well dressed, like a gentleman, who seemed perfectly cool and unconcerned.

"Hallo, my lad, you are a flat-race rider! That won't do, you know."

"Never rode a flat race in my life, and never mean to, sir; certainly not, at my time of life."

"How old are you, child?" said Todhunter, liking the looks of him, and thinking he might be licked into shape.

"Thirty-one," answered the child. "Married; one son; no other incumbrance. Wife takes washing when she can get it. Talk French and German; but not Italian. In the stables of the Pasha of Egypt; but didn't like it. Sober; honest. Eight years' good character from the Pasha. Loves his horses as his horses love him. Used to a gentleman's place, or wouldn't be here."

"Why, I thought you were a boy."

"So has many; but they found theirselves deceived."

"Where are your wife an l son?" said Squire Todhunter.

The little man went and rang the bell, and waited in cool silence till the footman came.

"Send up my wife and the boy, James," was all he said; after which he drummed on his hat.

Then there came up a very tiny woman, and a strange mite of a bright-eyed boy, about twelve, half the size of his father, who stared persistently at Squire Todhunter until that gentleman was uncomfortable, and the bargain was concluded.

"Can that boy ride?" said the squire. "He would make a good feather-weight."

"He rides well enough, sir; but he has took to flat-racing and billiards; and I am busted, sir, if you'll excuse the expression, if the present turf business ain't too much for *my*

stomach. I'm a-going to send him to the Pasha of Egypt's stables, to improve his moral tone."

"That won't do the boy any good," said the squire.

"Excusing me, sir, I know Cairo and I know Newmarket; and that boy's a-going to Grand Cairo."

The Squire gave some sensible advice, but it was not taken by this wonderful, resolute, little cross-country rider; and the boy went East, and East again, for ten years, winning flat races, on sometimes hopeless horses, sending the large sums he earned home to his father, to be invested in the funds (which was scrupulously done for him), and paying his travelling expenses by billiards and safe betting. He was at Bombay, and thought he would go to Australia; but then again thought he would go to Calcutta. And at Calcutta he heard of the Rajah of Belpore and his horses; and so he went up and looked in on our Nawab.*

Our Nawab was immensely flattered at the visit of such a distinguished young man. He at once allotted him apartments and money. When he found that Billy Lee could play billiards, he instantly sent to the right-about a tipsy, cashiered old captain, his previous instructor, and installed Billy Lee in his place.

Jim Mordaunt had, of course, met Billy Lee, and disliked him extremely. For Roland he had never given two thoughts about him; only once called him a rascally little renegade.

The Colonel scarcely knew of his existence. It was, therefore, not very pleasant when the Colonel, and Roland, and Jim rode into the Nawab's courtyard, to hear this young man's voice in high conversation with the Nawab, during the clicking of billiard-balls.

But they heard what he said before they went in at the window.

"I tell your Royal Highness that it is horses, and all horses, with them. Your horses should be brought inside this fortified compound, or else, in what is going to happen, you will let 'em go to the enemy. Did you ever hear me talk Hindustani?"

"No," said the Nawab; "you can't talk it."

At this moment our three friends entered the billiard-room. They were confronted by the little jockey billiard-player, and noticed him closely for the first time.

A bright, handsome, resolute, little fellow enough, and not a bit afraid of them. He struck out at them at once in French.

"His Highness says I cannot talk Hindustani. Me, who was three years in Bombay. I can talk it fast enough, and I lie in my bed at night, and hear them talking; and their talk is mischief and devilry, which things I hate. I am no renegade, Lieutenant Evans, as you have called me. I am an Englishman to the backbone; but *n'importe*. Cornet Mordaunt, I have something very particular to say to you."

Such a gallant little figure standing in front of such a strange group! The jockey was a little tiny dandy, whose head reached to one of Jim's waistcoat-buttons, The Colonel was in scarlet and white; Roland, Jim, and the Nawab in simple close-fitting white—a solemn group. But the little jockey was not a bit afraid of them.

"Colonel," he said, "I have been giving advice to his Highness which I think you will approve. You will hear what I have said from him. Cornet Mordaunt, I was just coming over to your bungalow, to say a word or two to your good old moonshee, if you would allow it. You and I know a brick when we see one."

"I fear you will not find him there," said Jim, greatly pleased by this mention of his old friend. "The Colonel came in, and I sent him away."

* All this is almost exactly true.

"Not home. Don't say home," said the little jockey, sharply.

"Yes," said Jim, quietly. "We saw him walking down the road homewards."

"But I thought he always stayed with you till late at night, and often all night in your bedroom, reading to you when you were restless?"

"He is gone home to-day, however," said Jim, still more quietly.

The jockey uttered a great oath. "Get your horses, gentlemen. I wouldn't have had this happen for a thousand pound. And I playing billiards there! Come along, in God's name."

He was first on his horse, and sped away out of the Nawab's compound. Jim was second, and rode as hard as he could to the good old man's house. There was nothing there but a very old woman, who was boiling rice in a pipkin, and stirring it round and round with a stick. And when Roland brought his horse half-way into the bungalow, and asked her if the old man had come home, she said "No," and spat at him. For she was our moonshee's mother, and most devoutly believed that the world was so governed by the great God that her son would be sent to everlasting torment, by losing caste in consequence of sitting in the room while Jim was eating bacon to his breakfast. But you must respect their prejudices, such as suttee, for example, if you are consistent. Jim rode off hard, and found the others on the sandy road, in front of the patch of jungle which lay between Jim's bungalow and the moonshee's.

Here there was a very old lean man in leg-irons, a convict, who was pounding on the road with a rammer, and had nothing on but a pair of drawers and a turban. When Jim rode up, the old gentleman had got his rammer between his knees, and had his withered old arms stretched out before him, with the palms of his hands close together, after the Indian manner. Those withered palms were stretched alternately from one sahib to another. "Colonel Sahib, sir, he did not go by here; Jockey Sahib, sir, I did not see him; Lieutenant Sahib, sir, I will tell all I know; Nawab Sahib, plead for me;" and so the poor ironed old convict went on with helpless, hopeless lie after lie until Jim rode up, and giving his bridle to the jockey, went up to the poor trembling old man, and put his two hands on his shoulders.

"Old man," he said in Hindustani, looking down into his face, "we have missed some one whom we love. Tell us all about it."

It was strange beyond measure to see the splendid young Englishman looking down into the face of the poor old lying Indian convict. England and India face to face. That love which the best of our men have for extremely old people told here. There is a kind of royal arch-masonry between the very young and prosperous and the very old and unfortunate. "I was like you once, and you may be as I am hereafter." This thieving and lying old Hindoo looked into Jim's honest face, and for the sake of what he saw there, undid all his lies and told the whole truth.

"Sahib, he did not come so far as this. But he turned into the jungle there, and you can see his footprints in the sand. Lieutenant Sahib, I will speak all the truth. Lieutenant Sahib, the Rajah of Bethoor went by in his carriage, and he stood up and looked into the jungle. And then, sir, your moonshee came along with his book on his bosom, and there was the wailing as of a child in the jungle, and I knew that it would turn him, for he has a kind heart. And I would have called louder than I did, but durst not. And he passed in there, and I heard two shots."

The party were awed enough now. The syces who had run after them

had their horses, and they moved together towards the jungle, and passed into it, the little jockey first.

"Is there any one here who is afraid of seeing death?" said he, and looking round confronted the tall solemn Nawab.

"When you have seen the suttee of your own mother, as I did, sir, you will not ask that question of *me*." And the sharp-tongued, honest, clever little Cockney understood in his clear, good little brain the whole matter, nodded to the Nawab, with his head on one side, and went on.

Jim's poor old moonshee! It was really very sad. He lay straight in their path, shot stone-dead, on his face, with the book which he had last been reading to Jim crumpled up under his honest old heart; a heap of snowy white amidst the dark greenery around. Jim did not mend matters by any means. He never thought that the old man was dead. He called out, "Baghobahar, most excellent and admirable of moonshees, sleeping in the forest of golden delight, get up and come home. We thought that we had lost thee, thou aged one."

Roland put his hands on his shoulders and said suddenly, "Hush, Jim, he is dead."

"Dead!"

"Assassinated."

"My Moonshee! Damnation! Let me get at him. Assassinated by whom?"

A very quiet voice said, "By the Rajah of Bethoor," and Jim knew that it was the Nawab of Belpore who had spoken. These two young men looked at one another for a moment, and saw that they understood each other.

Jim was perfectly quiet after this one outbreak—far too quiet to please Roland. They picked the old man up and laid him on his back. His face was very quiet; he had been shot twice through the heart, while on his supposed errand of mercy.

The little jockey said, "I knew they had a plot for his life, after his giving information about the cypher. Why, I have laid in bed and heard them talk it all over. I'll tell you why it is, gentlemen, that I have never let out my knowing of Hindustani; because I want to hear what is going to be done about the nobbling of horses. An unworthy motive. Let that pass. I knew that this would happen if the old man came home, but I thought he was always at the Cornet's bungalow."

Blurted out Jim, "The Colonel didn't like him at one time, and so he turned out when the Colonel came."

And the Colonel said, "That is perfectly true, in one respect. But it is not a thing which should have been said, and I like you the less for saying it just now, Mordaunt."

The jockey had picked up the moonshee's book, and had shaken it. Nothing dropped from it but a few loose papers and a photograph of Jim, which the jockey handed to him. The Colonel and Roland walked away together, lamenting over the accident. The Nawab and Jim remained behind, looking at one another over the dead body.

Unless history is altogether the Mississippi of lies which Matthew Arnold says it is, you will find, I think, that when two members of the Indo-Germanic race get scowling at one another over the dead body of one whom they have loved, — it means mischief.

CHAPTER XL.

JIM and the Nawab looked steadily at one another over the corpse for a little time, until the others were out of hearing. Then Jim said, steadily, "Are you with me?"

And the Nawab said, "To the death." And the two young men shook hands. "What shall we do?" said the Nawab. "You are of the

conquering race, and should suggest. I will follow."

"Beat him upon his own quarters."

"Who?"

"The Rajah."

"But how?" said the Nawab.

"Will you follow me, and let me do the talking?"

"Of course I will. But it is terribly dangerous."

"Tigers are. Yet we kill them."

"Yes, but armed," said the Nawab. "We are unarmed. Nevertheless, I will go with you. It is horribly dangerous. The crash is so near that we might precipitate it, and we have only your regiment here, and the two companies of the 201st, which came with Roland Evans, against five thousand native troops. But I will go."

Jim only nodded. And the Nawab saw how India was conquered.

"Lee," said Jim, "my good-hearted little fellow, get this poor body seen to for me."

And the jockey said, "Yes, sir. But are you going to the Rajah's palace?"

Jim said, "Yes."

"I wouldn't; but you know best. Here, you wallahs, all of you, come here. And while you are about it, you had better go and fetch half a hundred more. There is enough of you round somewhere." And so Jim, giving one more look at his poor old friend, mounted his horse, and rode away with the Nawab."

I must for a few moments follow Roland and the Colonel.

Roland said, "This is a sad business."

The Colonel said, "That a good old man, whom I, God forgive me, disliked, is gone to his God swiftly, with a smile on his face? I don't agree with you there."

"Jim, Jim! my dear sir," said Roland." I am not one to behowl myself over the swift death of a good man after a well-spent life. But Jim. All the boys from our school are strange and fantastic, but our Jim was the most fantastic of us all. I love him, as you know. But I tell you that there is in Jim a vein of cruelty and ferocity. He half killed my own brother, but he is most unhappily in love with my sister, though he never opens his mouth on the subject. He loved, in his quaint odd way this old man, and I think that he has never looked on death before. I cannot be answerable for what he will do."

"My good lad," said the Colonel, "who ever said you could? We English are the oddest people on the face of the earth. The French have a notion of that, but their caricatures of us fail because we are utterly beyond any Celt who ever was born. I have commanded this regiment for nine years, and I have seen stranger fellows than your Jim. Have you tried religion with him?"

"He won't stand it," said Roland.

"I wish he would," said the Colonel. "I always know where to have a religious man. I am not what you may call deeply religious myself; but if I could get a regiment of religious men behind me—by Jove"—The Colonel was puzzled to go on. Words failed him. What he could do with a regiment of the men called in the service "Methodists," was too much for his brain. But he knew them, and so does English history.

"You tried him with High Church formulas?" said the Colonel.

"He was always used to them."

"I wish Havelock was nearer. I wish Havelock would take him in hand. Havelock has done wonders for some of our wildest ones. There's Willoughby again. By the by, you saw Willoughby last week. Did he say anything odd?"

"Yes," said Roland. "He said something very odd indeed. He scarcely spoke to me at all during

the necessary business of sending the company here; but he never left off looking at me. I did not know whether he liked me or not; but when we parted he laid his two hands on my shoulders, and said, "You are a man who knows how to die."

"He said *that*, did he?" said the Colonel. "And what did *you* say?"

"I said I was ready to die for England; and he replied, 'For India, India. God has given us a great trust here, and we must carry it out.'"

"Just like him," said the Colonel. "That is the best young man in India. Did he say anything else?"

"No. Why?"

"Because, what he says is generally worth hearing," said the Colonel. "That is why. But about Jim Mordaunt. Can you prevent his making a fool of himself?"

"I never know what he will do for five minutes together," said Roland. "I had power over him once, but I have completely lost it. At one time he would do what I told him. Now my only way of influencing him is to ask him *not* to do the thing I want done. Whereupon he does it at once. But he is getting up to *that* now."

Roland and the Colonel would have been much more anxious about Jim had they known of the strange errand on which he had set himself, and into which he had induced the Nawab, a longer-headed man than Jim, to follow him. Though the Nawab followed Jim, he had opinions of his own, and after his return from this ridiculous expedition, set all his people fortifying his palace under the tropical moon.

They cantered away towards the Rajah's palace, which stood on the summit of a rock, and they rode leisurely up to the gate, and through the gate, and through other gates, as far as they could go. Jim was the first European who had ever got so far. They went through court after court, and cloister after cloister, swarming with staring natives of all ages and sexes, diligently doing infinitesimally small things, and earning about three half-pence a day on an average.

Then they jumped off their horses, and left them to the grooms. And pushing on, the Nawab close to Jim, they came to a heavy teak gate which entirely puzzled Jim. The Nawab put him aside.

"We will get in here," said the Nawab; "we shall never get out again, but I will go to the devil with you. Put your foot in the wicket when it is opened." And the Nawab knocked *nine* times.

"Why that number?" whispered Jim.

And the Nawab explained it to him hurriedly. And Jim pulled a long face and said, "Well, this is Queer Street." And the Nawab said "*It is.*" Said the Nawab, "You English fancy that you know India. Ha!"

The wicket was opened cautiously, which gave Jim the opportunity of pushing it wide open, and knocking the aged porter on the flat of his back. In another moment they had shut it again, and the Nawab and Jim stood alone and defenceless within the court-yard of a palace more unutterably given to the devil than possibly that of Heliogabalus.

One may distrust Suetonius, as one habitually does State papers, as being *ex parte*. But no man out of Bedlam can distrust the contemporary evidence about the state of Indian courts.

Jim from Shrewsbury, and the Nawab of Belpore, stepped swiftly on through a broad cloistered quadrangle, as nearly like a college quadrangle or court as need be, surrounded by cloisters; but deluged with floods of water in square pools.

I must cease here; I know too much to speak. Might we not, how-

ever, allow a little more liberty in the working of fiction?

Jim and the Nawab, however, held their heads in the air, and passed along the broad path which runs between the baths towards the awful, barbarous building which closed up the quadrangle on the further side. It was a building in which every idea of art (as we know it; there may be art of which we know nought) was polluted and rendered abominable. I have no worse word to say against the Cotsea Bhang at Delhi, or the Mosque at Benares, than I have to say against the Mosque at Ispahan (probably the greatest and purest thing in the world) or Contances Cathedral. I say that they are all exquisitely beautiful, but this building was an exception. It was like the great temple at Pegu; it was like the Pagoda at Tanjore; it was like the Pavilion at Brighton; the walls of Jericho with the gates of Gaza.

"But see what we *can* do," said the Nawab, laying his hand on Jim's shoulder; "look there."

Certainly there was a mosque to the left, with two minarets soaring into the summer air. Certainly Western art, called Gothic, had never produced anything so perfect. Certainly the two tall stalks of the minarets cast themselves aloft in the air, and branched out at intervals, like the Equisetum. Certainly even dull Jim got into his head that the builders of the present day were making rather a mess of it. But equally certain was it that the Pagan building was before him, and that he was going to tell the Rajah a piece of his mind.

They went in under the dark, low, barbaric doorway, the Nawab keeping his left hand on Jim's shoulder and his right hand on his dagger. Jim was the first British officer who had ever entered that abode of sin and horror. The first long cool corridor they entered was perfectly empty; but at the end of it, on a flight of marble steps, was an old woman, who fled nimbly from them, in silence."

"I will go first; I have been here before," said the Nawab.

And they passed on up the staircase, and through corridor after corridor of the building, now silent and deserted since the old woman's alarm, until retreat became utterly impossible, as it seemed to the Nawab.

"If he is *ready*," said he to Jim, "we are dead men. Here is the door. Shall we knock?"

Jim gave no answer, but pushed it open.

Gilt looking-glasses, French china, Dresden china, Wedgwood, Minton, old Chelsea, Giotto, and Grindling Gibbons; an expensive copy of the Madonna della Seggia, beside a photograph of the "Derby Day." Why go on? One is not writing a catalogue for Christie and Manson. No taste, no tone, anywhere; ghastly, barbaric brutality—namely, scarlet and gold; a brutal barbarism, beside which the half-toned fury of Ghengis, Baatu, and the gentle Kublai Khan, relieved only by jewels and gold, look high art. Brutal, senseless, godless!

In the centre of it lay the Rajah, reading the *English* translation of a French novel, not by any means a Balzac or a Jules Janin; quite a different sort of one.

He was quite alone, and had violated every rule of art in his person as he had in his room. He was dressed in green velvet, scarlet silk, and gold. He was a very handsome man, lighter in complexion than the Nawab—lighter than many Englishmen—somewhat fat for his age, with a black, drooping moustache. And before him, as he pretended, suddenly, came Jim and the Nawab.

With pretended surprise he turned over on his divan, turned down his page, and lay looking at them.

"The dog is ready," said the Nawab.

"I'll break his —— neck for fivepence, first," said Jim, in a whisper.

"You are the Rajah of Bethoor?" said Jim.

"I *thought* I was till this moment," said the Rajah, in very tolerable English. "I have begun to doubt it this last few moments. My agreement with the Company is well known, and one part of it was that I was to be left in possession of my domestic peace. I now find that I am to be insulted by the invasions of drunken English subalterns and their miserable native imitators."

"*Il n'est pas prêt,*" said the Nawab. "*Allez vous en jeune Evans,*" which was what he made of the oft-repeated Shrewsbury slang, "Go it, young Evans."

"I do not understand Italian," said the Rajah, "and I know not Evans. It is Mordaunt who is here. What do you want?"

"I want to know about my moonshee," said Jim.

"I am not an impressor of moonshees; ask your colonel," said the Rajah. "If you want a moonshee, ask him to find you one."

"I believe that you have murdered mine," said Jim.

"What can I possibly care what a subaltern like you believes or disbelieves?" said the Rajah. "If I had had him assassinated, do you think I would confess it yet? You can go—for the present."

"I'll have the truth out of you, if you were fifty rajahs," said Jim.

"Possibly," said the Rajah. "You can go for this once, however."

And as he said this he rose and advanced towards them, his book in his left hand, and his right forefinger pointed, not at Jim, but at the Nawab.

"For you," he said, in Hindustani, "you shall NOT die. You shall pray for death, but I shall keep you alive. You shall roll before my feet, praying me to kill you; but you shall not die. You English-lover, have you read "The Curse of Kehama," the only thing worth reading the English ever produced? You shall not die! No, you shall not die!"

"You shall, though!" shouted the Nawab; and before our poor Jim could collect his thoughts, the Nawab had dashed out behind him, with a long gleaming knife in his hand, and was preparing for a tiger spring upon the Rajah.

Jim had just time to cast himself between them. He got the knife through his deltoid muscle; it was as likely to have gone through his heart. He forced the Nawab back, crying "Consider, old boy, consider. Before a British officer! Old man, you have stabbed me accidentally; but I will throw you on your back if you are not quiet."

The Nawab was quiet at once. "Why did you not let me get to him? It would have been better. Come away." And turning to the Rajah, who stood perfectly still, he said, "If you have any gratitude in your dog's heart, you will remember that Mordaunt saved your life to-day."

"I will remember Mordaunt and remember you," said the Rajah. "You are free to go." And they went—not having gained much.

Jim was badly wounded and the Nawab was in the deepest distress, at which Jim chaffed him, telling him that he was not half an Englishman yet. It was no worse than a bloody nose. Still the blood was soaking in an ugly manner through Jim's white sleeves, and the Nawab wanted him to stay on the outer quadrangle and have it dressed. But Jim said, "No; let us get out of this hole. I can't stand this." And so they went out through the great teak door once again.

So came one of the strangest surprises ever seen, yet one of the most easily accounted for. Surprises *do*

occur in the world, but they always arise from the most natural causes.

When they got out into the sunshine beyond the gate, there stood before them a British officer in blue coat and white trousers, with a sword hooked up to his side, and his shako on the side of his head. A smallish officer, just up to regulation. A marvellous neat, tight little officer, up to any amount of work. And when Jim looked on the officer he cried "Heavens and earth! it is Eddy!"

And it was Eddy. And Eddy said, "I have exchanged into the 201st Foot, in order to be with you and Roland."

CHAPTER XLI.

THE Dean of St. Paul's had long wearied of his Oxford work. Eternal grinding at bad Greek, bad Latin, and bad logic, had become deeply wearisome to him. Most of the men of his time, too, had gone away, and the men he sat with in common were bright, clever, hearty enough; but they were too young for him. He was getting a Fogy among Dons.

Why, he had often put it to himself, should he stay there trying to live down the old Provost, who was not so very old, and become head of the house himself? It was a miserable life. Certainly, Norway, in the long vacation, freshened him up a little; but then he was the only man in the college who ever went to Norway. He could see that his salmon stories bored men at dessert, and, like a wise man, he left off telling them. And, indeed, for him, there was little left to talk about, save the everlasting pettinesses of hebdomadal board, or something which he hated still more.

When he had been young, there had been a great and brilliant school at the university. A school of men, who, in various ways, have left their mark upon the generation, and whose names are familiar in all men's mouths even now. *He* had been one of them. But they were all gone. Some to Rome, some to bishoprics, some to deaneries, one particularly to a school, leaving his seal for a whole generation or more on the boys of England, partly through his own genius, and partly through the surprising genius of three or four of his pupils. They had split off in opinion, this mighty old band of giants, and there were only two left "up" now. Himself and one other. The Dean and this last of the giants of the old time had extremely diverged in opinion: though in gentle social intercourse, whenever they met, there was no change.

In a pretty garden by the river walked the Dean all at ease, looking at the silly deer under the overarching elms; and towards him along the walk came this old giant, with his head bowed low, walking fast and steadily.

Their eyes met as the Professor raised his head. "Ah, dean!" he said, "we never see one another now; and we are the only two left. Let us walk and talk together." And they hooked arms, and walked and talked.

Over all the old ones who had fought and striven in the old times. Gently, like elderly, wise men, not like hot-headed boys, they talked over their differences; and as they walked and talked, the dear old times seemed to come back again in wave after wave of reminiscence, until the tide

of good-will was high. Boys in your full high blood, fight, squabble, and quarrel for your principles. If a man won't use strong language in defence of his principles he is not much of a man. But let two old men, with the Indian summer of recollection around them, talk over their old quarrels with kindly good-will.

That is what the Professor and the Dean did. And the Professor said, "I dare say I am 'Laudator temporis acti,' my dear Dean. But we have not the same stamp of young men up now. I partly attribute it, of course, to the atrocious opinions of you and of your party, and in a still more extreme degree to boat-racing."

"My opinions are not so *very* atrocious," said the Dean. "And as for boat-racing, I always hated it. But, it is as you say. I find it at our place. We have a lot of men who call themselves of *your* party at our place now; and we have a lot of men who call themselves of mine. But there is scarcely one of them who understands the questions between us. On both sides shallow verbiage on details. The fight now is not the old grand fight when you and I fought; there are not the men to fight it."

And the Dean mentioned a string of names which I dare not write down, one, one of the greatest in our time. Not of one party but of two great ones, but which were all so familiar to the Dean and the Professor that they called them often by their Christian names. Men who took two sides yet could love and respect one another. Men, both sides of them "severe," yet with a liberality which shames that of this day. Is there any one who has not been astonished lately at Keble's opinions on the tests? The two parties in those days were *sure*, and, therefore, bold and magnanimous.

"I wish you would come and dine with me to-night," said the Dean, "I should like to show you our new tutors of both parties."

"Thanks, rather not," said the Professor. "I dislike looking on decadence. We have not had a fine team of boys up for a long time."

"I beg your pardon," said the Dean, with animation. "K—— sent me up the year before last as fine a team of boys as I would wish to see."

The Professor looked him full in the face and laughed at him. The Dean could not think why.

"A splendid team of lads. Wild as hawks, fantastic as monkeys, I will allow. But splendid lads. I wish you had known them."

"Roland, Eddy, Jack, Jim, and, to make up a fifth, Maynard. From Shropshire. Quite so." Said the Professor laughing again.

"Well, that is true," said the Dean, puzzled. "Could they have come your way. I warned them against you and your evil ways very solemnly on many occasions."

Undergraduates lounging about the High Street were utterly and entirely dumbfounded at the spectacle of the Dean and the Professor, known as deadly enemies, thirsting for one another's blood, standing face to face with one another laughing heartily. Still more when they saw the Professor slap the Dean on the shoulder and say, "I am a conjuror; I am a conjuror."

"Upon my word I think you are, old friend," said the Dean, merrily.

"What have you done with these boys?" asked the Professor, as they resumed their walk.

"Well," replied the Dean, with a long face, "three are gone to India. One is married, and the other is doing nothing at all."

"A nice mess you have made of it," said the Professor. "I should recommend you to try parish work after this."

"I wish I could get some. I wish

I was away from here. I am getting too old to have influence with the young men, for I have not made a name like you."

"But, your turn must have come in for a home."

"I let it pass. It was only £260 a year, and house and glebe.

"It was not enough."

"It was not then; but I would take it now. I am sick of this. I have done no good with my life. I think you have done much evil with yours. On certain points, dear old friend, there must be no compromise between us. I would oppose you in *public* to-morrow, you know."

The only answer was a kindly squeeze of the arm, and a golden silence on both sides. That is the way, as far as I have seen, that good men, deeply in earnest, and in earnest to the death, but on opposite sides, are getting to treat one another.

At a certain garden-door at the end of a College, they parted, and as the Professor opened his garden-door he chuckled, and said, "He will never know of it. He will never dream."

For a somewhat strange thing had happened to the Professor that morning. He had been sitting at his work when his servant brought him a card. Whereon was written "Mr. George Mordaunt." Whereupon he had risen, and gone quickly to greet a stout square-headed man with grizzled hair, about fifty years old, who to do full honour to his old university, had dressed himself in the dress of twenty-five years previously, the time when he had been an undergraduate. A blue coat and gilt buttons, buff waistcoat, and drab trousers. And the Professor beholding him grasped his hand and said, "My dear Mordaunt! After so many years!"

"The old place is not any stranger than your face, Professor," said our stout good Squire, "though it makes me feel a little old. It is a place that hangs about one's heart—does it not?"

"I don't think I could stand to leave it now, Mordaunt. What have you been doing that you look so young?"

"Shooting, hunting, fishing, farming, managing my estate, and the poor souls on it, by God's help: educating my boys; and as far as all other things cultivating an absolute vacuity of thought, as you will find when I come to my business. That is what makes me look so young."

"I have not worn so well as you," said the Professor, smiling.

"You look old enough to be my father," said Squire Mordaunt. "And as my father (though we are of the same age) I have come to consult you: and what is more to *take* your advice."

"Prettily put," said the Professor, "I will try you, old friend."

"But have you time at my disposal?" said Squire Mordaunt.

"It is now ten," said the Professor, "and from this until four in the afternoon I am at your service, for I have no lectures."

"Till four! Bless the man, I shan't be half an hour. Come, hear my confession."

The Professor, folding his arms upon his breast, leant forward with a smile, and George Mordaunt began.

He was longer than half an hour. He told the Professor nearly all I have told you, about his boys and their various relations. About Roland and Ethel, and how he hoped some time or another that such a matter might come to pass. About Jim and his fantastic foolishness; about the good influence that the Evanses had on him, and about the unhappy attachment of the unhappy youth to his friend's wife. Nay, he even went so far as to put him in possession of the comical duello between Sir Jasper Meredith, and Mr. Maynard, of the Barton: the farce of the tale; but when alluding to the differences which had arisen between young Maynard and his wife, by Mrs. Maynard's scheming for Sir Jasper, told him that *that* should be set right

by Eleanor Evans in time. "In time, my dear Professor, for it is a most delicate and painful subject, which will bear no handling save by the hand of a woman of genius. And Miss Evans is a woman of genius, if ever one lived." And so he brought her on the carpet and told the Professor all about her from beginning to end. And the Professor only nodded his head from time to time, and showed by his eyes that he understood the whole matter from beginning to end.

"She had an attachment once for my brother, now General Mordaunt in India, but it was not a happy one at all. He admired her, for she was very beautiful, but Bob was a dandy, and her brusqueries palled on him after a time. The necessary words were never said, and I think happily so, for they would never have done together at all.

"But another man was attached to her also. And she liked and respected him deeply. I think that she hankers for a renewal of her acquaintance with him. They are both too old to marry, that would be absurd, but I think it would please Eleanor to have him near her, not perhaps so much on his own account as on a sentimental ground, which will not seem to you, I am sure, ridiculous."

The Professor withheld his opinion.

"She is of a very affectionate disposition. She is utterly devoted to two people; firstly, and in a minor degree to my daughter Ethel, and secondly, to the younger Evans, Edward, the nephew. She has slaved for that boy (she is a farmer, as I told you), she has toiled over fallow and down for him winter and summer. She has laid awake planning for him, and since he has gone to India, she has lain awake weeping for him. I swear to you," said the Squire, with a terrible thump on the table, "that her love for that pretty lad is the most beautiful thing I have ever seen in my life."

The Professor said, nodding, "Aye! aye."

"Now again, leaving alone the personal affection I have for her, she has been the *making* of my daughter Ethel. (The finest girl in all England, sir.) And I want to oblige her. And I am certain that she has a hankering for the society of her old sweetheart."

The Professor sat up as if he did not exactly follow him. And he followed him still worse, when Mordaunt continued.

"Now old Hesketh has dropped at last, and so Doddington is in my gift, and I think that if the thing were done delicately. Say by *your* recommendation—don't you see?"

The Professor began to see once more.

"That it would do—you follow me? I come to consult *you*. I have no son or relation in the Church. What is more natural than that I, living out of the world, should come to you, an old friend I am sure, not actually to ask for a nomination, no, no; but to ask you; is such a man fit for the post?"

"My recommendation would be the very worst thing he could possibly have. It would raise a wasps' nest about your ears."

Mordaunt sat silent for a minute. His old friend's name certainly *did* suggest polemics.

"Well, I wanted to ask you about another part of the business. I am, I hope, a sound Churchman. This man has been called unsound. I don't go with you, but I respect your judgment. What *is* your opinion of the man."

"I must know who he is, you know."

"The Dean of St. Paul's. If you decide against him, I will go no further."

The Professor gave a start. "He and I have had some battles-royal."

"That is one of the reasons why I

came to you as a Christian English gentleman to decide for me."

"Then come in half an hour," and Mordaunt nodding went away.

When the half-hour was gone, he came back and got his answer.

"By all means do what you proposed. He is doing himself no good here in any way.

"He is excellent, virtuous, diligent, admirable. He wants family life. He wants human ties. As an adversary, I shall be glad to get rid of him," he went on, laughing. "As a man and a Christian I shall always respect him. You are lucky to catch such a man; but are we sure he will come?"

"The living is nearly £800 a year," said Mordaunt.

"Foolish man," said the Professor laughing, "you might in these precious times have got £12,000 for it. Good bye, and God go with you."

CHAPTER XLII.

I HOPE my readers will entirely dismiss from their minds the idea that Ethel was in the least degree "fast." She was only a country young lady who was a consummate horsewoman, and fond of riding long distances very fast, alone.

About this time it "behuved," as the Scotch say, her father to fall in love with, and buy, a hunter which was not in any way up to his weight, and what was more ride it, against the advice of his wife, son, and daughter. The horse did the best it could for him, but the illimitable grief to which the Squire and this horse came to "among them" as the stud-groom put it, was perfectly illimitable. When, however, it came to the Squire's trying the largest water-jump in the country, with the hounds running, and the horse landing on the near side, and the Squire swimming to the opposite one, he, heretofore obstinate, gave it up as a bad job, and said the horse was a worthless beast.

Ethel and John did not think so however. It was a beautiful large slightish thing, perfectly up to ten stone, though he had triumphantly proved he was not up to thirteen. Young Mordaunt tried it one day with a horse-rug round his knees on a side-saddle, and it went like a lamb. He and Ethel, secretly, one dewy morning at sunrise, had a secret meeting in the stable-yard, and he put Ethel on this horse, and the good brother and sister rode away, talking as brother and sister should, through the lanes, which grew narrower, wilder, and more grassy as they went on, until at the end of one turf lane, there was a five-barred gate *not* open. And young Mordaunt put his horse at it and topped it, and Ethel *she* put her horse at it and topped it like a bird, and they were out on the wild breezy slopes of Longmynd together, talking of Roland and Eddy, and Jim, with the lazy valley awaking to its toil in the clearing mist six hundred feet below them.

That horse would do for Ethel. At breakfast they did so din their wonderful ride, and the wonderful performances of that horse into their father's ears, that he, to save his intellect as he said, then and there gave it to Ethel, on the sole condition of its never being named to him again.

This was the first good jumping horse which Ethel had ever had. And if he did not improve in that art, it was not from want of practice. Its name was "Cheery Bird."

"What is the matter with your face, Ethel," asked the Squire one morning.

"I have scratched it," said Ethel.

"So I see," said her father. "Unless some one else scratched it for you."

"The fact of the matter is that I have been out riding before breakfast," said Ethel.

"So I should have gathered from the fact that you have come to breakfast in your riding-habit, that your complexion is like a dairy-maid's, and that you have apparently combed your hair with a carving-fork."

"Well, I will tell the truth," said Ethel. "I went over to see Mary Mordaunt on Cheery Bird at daybreak; and I know you like me to be at home by breakfast, and I took a short-cut. And I got pounded, and put Cheery Bird at a hedge which was thicker than I thought, and got my face scratched."

"Why did you go to the Barton?" asked the Squire, as "black as thunder."

"To tell them the news from India," said Ethel, ready to drop into the earth, but incapable of lying.

"Leave *India* alone when you go *there*, Ethel. I expressly desire you to do so. If any of them want to know about India, they can ask your mother."

The Squire said no more, but he little dreamt how far poor innocent Ethel had carried her indiscretion. That unhappy and infatuated Jim had written *again* to Mildred Maynard, leaving the letter open, and begging his sister to read it. It was all about the Nawab and the Moonshee, and Ethel had taken it. Poor lad! he did not like to drop out of *all* communication with her.

But I wonder what Ethel would have said, had she known that Mildred Maynard was lying, a heap of clothes with a moan inside it, while her mother-in-law stood over her with the letter—the letter which Ethel had brought safe in her pocket.

Mrs. Maynard was not an early iser by any means. But she was aroused very early by hearing a horse's hoofs on the gravel, and looking out she saw Ethel dismounting, with a letter in her hand.

She put on her dressing-gown, and going swiftly to her daughter Mary's room, shook her by the shoulder, and said ——.

"Be ill, lie in bed." And the girl having realized her orders, turned over and went to sleep again.

Ethel was not long with Mildred, and never dreamt any more than poor Mildred did that "the Cobra," (which was the last flower of speech Miss Evans had invented in favour of Mrs. Maynard,) was doing anything else but snoring. "That is the way she ultimately finished, and put an end to her husband," Aunt Eleanor said, "She snored him into a better world. *I've* heard her."

But Mrs. Maynard was by no means snoring, but was watching in her dressing-gown for Ethel to go. The instant Ethel was gone, she had come swiftly into Mildred's dressing-room, snatched the letter from her hand, and stood staring at her.

Hence the heap of clothes with the moan inside it, which lay on the floor.

Cheery Bird got quite as much work as he wanted. Take this one day in that devoted and honest horse's existence for instance. After breakfast he must be saddled again, and away she must go after Miss Evans. Miss Evans was not at home. Aunt Eleanor would have scorned the action at eleven o'clock in the day. She was on the farm, and at the further end of it, of course. And her farm being of 700 acres or more, with the Grange at one end of it, she was a mile away.

Still Ethel was in no particular hurry, in fact she rather dreaded meeting Miss Evans, and that very keen lady's eye. Yet when she heard that Miss Evans was with the late lambs, in the forty-acre turnip-field, she must needs ride across country, taking fence after fence, though there were plenty of lanes and byeways, leaving alone the immortal right of way, which was a Roman road, and as she positively declared, part of Watling Street, which however goes

through Lebotwood three miles off. Perhaps it was good health, and good humour. Perhaps it was that Aunt Eleanor's fences, like those of all good farmers, were so very easy, but I regret to say that Ethel, wherever she could find a bit of grass, "larked" from one grass-field to another, until she saw Aunt Eleanor, in a grey habit, on her obstinate cob, standing in the middle of a partly folded turnip-field, scolding her shepherd.

Ethel was just jumping the last fence into the turnip-field when Aunt Eleanor saw her. "Hi!" she cried out, "don't ride through my turnips. You must be out of your mind. Come down under the hedge and over the folded part," which Ethel did, and met Miss Evans.

"I don't want my farm to be made a steeple-chase course of," she said in greeting Ethel. "If you can't ride round by the lanes, you had better stay away. What do you mean by larking over my farm like that?"

"Your fences are so easy," Miss Evans.

"Ah, I have slashed them down to get rid of the small birds, which are a plague and a curse. They are fifty times worse than the game. The game preservation and the law of trespass preserve more small birds than I want. Look at the sparrows in my rick-yard. Kill caterpillars, fiddle-de-dee; not as long as they can get grain, and very few afterwards. I am Lady Patroness of the Pulverbatch Sparrow Club, and I mean to remain so. What do you want? Why do you come larking over my fences like this?"

"Are you very cross, Miss Evans?"

"Yes, my dear, I don't think I ever was in such an abominable temper in all my life."

"Can I do anything to remove your ill-temper, Miss Evans?"

"Yes, stay with an old lonely woman and bear it."

"You are not very old, Miss Evans, and I will stay with you for ever, in good temper and in bad temper, if you will let me."

Aunt Eleanor gave Ethel a look, which she understood. A look which meant worlds. Those two understood one another.

"Come," said Ethel, sedately, for she knew her humours, "I will never lark over your fences again if you will tell me what is the matter, and give me some broiled chicken for lunch."

Aunt Eleanor turned to the shepherd, and said—

"Now, mind, I don't draw back from one word which I have said. Your orders were to shift hurdles *every* day, I don't want this piece of clay pounded as hard as iron, and my wethers half starved because your daughter is fool enough to marry young Dickson. *You* ought to have shifted the hurdles, or the bridegroom should have come and done it, or the bride should have come and done it in her wedding-dress, so that it was done. Still, at the same time, we did so well with our spring lambs that I can afford to give you two shillings a week extra, making eighteen shillings. And your wife can have the whole of the washing now, which will be from nine shillings to twelve shillings a week, provided she don't send the things home in that state of pig and crock which the poor woman who is dead now did."

So, scattering blessings with the sound of curses, the reverse of Boileau's bishop, she fared on her quaint way with the beautiful Ethel. And as they rode quietly together Ethel said—

"Please, Miss Evans, why are you so cross?"

"Because people are such fools."

"Who?"

"Every body I know."

"Am I?" asked Ethel.

"My dear," said Aunt Eleanor, "I gave you my most emphatic opinion on *that* point a long time ago."

"So you did. Have you not changed it?"

"Not a bit."

"Well, never mind me. Who else have been making fools of themselves?"

"Eddy, to begin with."

"Of course," said Ethel.

"I don't see why you should say of course," said Aunt Eleanor. "Eddy is exceptionally clever. I should, for example, rank Eddy's intellect far higher than yours."

"Heaven help me then!" said Ethel. "But what has he done last?"

"Exchanged into the 201st, so as to be with Roland and your brother Jim."

"The best thing the boy ever did. Why, the very grooms say that one boy requires two men to look after him."

"Your brother Jim wants some looking after," said Miss Evans.

"No, he does not," said Ethel, emphatically. "No one knows Jim but I. He comes of wild, fierce, fighting blood. And he will fight when the time comes. God save the man who stops his way! Look here, Miss Evans, you leave Jim alone, and I'll leave Eddy alone."

"Who is losing her temper *now?*" said Miss Evans.

"I suppose I am," said Ethel, bursting into a furious passion of tears, and bending her head down over her horse's neck. "Miss Evans, the wise men say that there is to be wrath and war there soon; wrath and war such as the world has never seen before. And Jim, what can save him? Oh, my brother! Oh, my brother!"

It was well that this happened, for they were soon quiet again, and more friendly than ever. Aunt Eleanor, of course, retained a little causticity just to seem the more natural.

"Who has been making a fool of himself next?" asked Ethel.

"Your father," she replied with a whimsical smile. "He has gone and given the living of Doddington to the Dean of St. Paul's."

"I know, dear Miss Evans. Are you not glad of it?"

"Oh! yes, I am glad of it. I am very fond of the man; and if I was a hundred years younger, and he asked me, I would marry him. But I am not such a fool as to marry when I am nearly fifty."

"Is he handsome?" Miss Evans.

"No, child; he is very ugly, and wears a wig."

"It would be rather nice if you *were* to marry him," urged Ethel.

"Well, nice or nasty, I am not going to do it, as your father well knows. Therefore, I say, your father has made a fool of himself in bringing the man here."

"Who next?" said Ethel.

"Your brother Jim. He has gone and married a Moonshee, as far as I can understand from Eddy's letter. It is possible that it may be the best arrangement under the circumstances, but I hate the kind of thing. Your father's uncle married a quadroon, or a creole, or something or another, and they went down in a gale of wind in the Gulf of Mexico, with all hands, in the hurricane of 1788."

"But, my dear Miss Evans, —"

"Oh, you may well say your dear Miss Evans. Of course, you will speak up for your brother. *I* spoke up for *my* brother at one time, and a pretty mess I have made of it. I only know that if Eddy comes home with a puce-coloured wife she shall attend church, or I'll know the reason why."

"But, Miss Evans —"

"And then your brother must go horsing the mail-coach, and upsetting it into the graveyard. I *know* he has been horsing the long stages. I am *assured* of that; he would not be your brother if he did not. Very likely with Eddy's money. Think of

an officer and a gentleman marrying a Moonshee, horsing long stages, driving his own cattle, and upsetting Her Majesty's mail in the churchyard! There is one comfort, the Nabob, or as Eddy foolishly spells it, the Nawab, was on the box-seat, and broke his neck."

It took a long time for Ethel to explain the real state of the case, which the reader is in possession of. All she got, after all, was a loud and incredulous sniff. It was explained to her by Ethel, the Dean, old Mordaunt, and young Mordaunt, that the Moonshee was an aged gentleman and scholar of the Brahmin religion. But she nailed her colours to the mast, and kept them there still. She is more than ever persuaded, she says, that mixed marriages and friendships between different races are a mistake. And if further pressed she points to the Nawab of Belpore, and requests to know what came of Jim's friendship for *him*.

"Then, there is this *Allan* (she never would say 'Evans.') coming down here and establishing a conventicle, under the rector's own nose, with the money he has robbed from Roland. He says he must worship according to his own conscience. He has got a fine conscience to take £1,000 a year, rent-charge, from Roland. What is good enough for me ought to be good enough for him, one would fancy. Well, I have told him *my* mind pretty often, which is a comfort."

It may have been to her. It was little enough to him, poor young fellow.

"Well, he will die. And what is more, die of heart-disease and overwork amongst Christ's poor; and what is more, go to heaven," resumed Aunt Eleanor. "I wish I didn't dislike him so very, very much. I never could keep my wicked old tongue away from that young man. I have been a most wicked old woman to him."

"He loved Eddy," said Ethel, quietly.

There was a very long pause.

"It was good of you to say that, child. You are a good child. But, when I committed the great and irretrievable wickedness of my life, I had not thought of that. I had ruined him before I thought of *that*. Had I thought of it I would have stayed my hand. It is too late now. Good actions, child, live for ever, and bring forth fruit a thousandfold. Evil, thoughtless, spiteful actions, like mine towards him, bring down a heavy retribution even in this world. The Papists say, that they can release you from the consequences of your own actions, by certain formulas. I am sure I wish they could; but, then, on the other hand, they can't, don't you see. If I was gaby enough to believe in it, and the Pope of Rome were to send me a pilgrimage to Mecca—I should say, Compostella, I'd go, to undo the wickedness and wrong I have done to that young man in a moment of folly and spite."

Ethel did not understand her; but she knew her well enough to know that, under her quaint fantastic language, there was a meaning, and a deep one.

"Here has been Sir Jasper Meredith again; a pretty fool he has made of himself. That little heap of bones, to save Roland from ruining his life, by marrying Mary Maynard, wrote a letter, proposing to her. And that old *trot*, her mother, is determined to bring him to book, and to make that sleepy ox, young Maynard, bring him to book likewise. *She* knows that her son would not stand her in his house long, fool as he is; and so she wants to move to Sir Jasper Meredith's. *She* knows that he would not move in such a matter, unless she had a hold over him, stronger than ever she had before. And what has she done? Made up a case of jealousy between our innocent little Mildred

(another fool) and her honest oxlike son. She has done that. I beg your pardon, child, for talking of such things; but the world wags as it wags; and I don't hold with keeping a girl till she is five and twenty, in a puritanical fictitious ignorance of evil. Fiddle-de-dee."

"But, Miss Evans, John Maynard has no one to be jealous about, I should think."

"Of *course* he has not. But, your brother Jim (as I previously remarked), is a fool, and has written her letters. Who has taken them to her I don't know. But, old Myrtle knows she has got them, and that her husband has been shown some. And there's a pretty kettle of fish."

She did not notice that poor Ethel gave a low groan, and bent down on her saddle; but she went on.

"That is what reconciles me to this unhappy marriage of Jim's with the Moonshee. What place she is Moonshee of, I don't know; she seems to take no territorial title. I dare say she will make him a good wife, and she no doubt brings him money. How on earth she is to go in to dinner, or what rank she will take in the county, I can't conceive. Lady Caradoc must go in first, I suppose, unless I send the Moonshee in as bride; but that wouldn't do for long, you know, and I don't want to disoblige Lady Caradoc. I want her to buy my clover hay; I could let her have it five shillings a ton cheaper than I could any one else, because I shouldn't have to deliver it."

"Dear Miss Evans," said Ethel, "all this is perfect nonsense."

"My dear, I assure you that if you bring Lady Caradoc to me to-morrow, she shall have the hay at £3 15*s*."

"I do not mean about that. I mean about this Moonshee. His Moonshee is an old man who teaches him Hindustani."

"My dear," said Miss Evans, loftily, "I do not, for a moment, dispute that you are quite right in believing everything which is told you. But, at the same time, I must point out to you that I am much older than you; that *my* brother was more *years* in India than yours has been *months*, and that I frequently heard him mention these very Moonshees, as being the most *thundering humbugs going*. That was his expression. He may have been right or he may have been wrong. He was not, according to my standard, a wise man; but he was not entirely deprived of understanding. I think we had better change the conversation, because really I am certain about nothing, since you have told me that Jim's young wife was an aged Brahmin gentleman of scholastic habits. Live and learn. I am only certain of one thing at this present moment, and that is, that spring lamb does not pay for rearing so far from London. The loss in the transit is too great. And the pretty little beasts do suffer so horribly if they are sent alive. Good bye, child."

When Ethel got home her father and brother were standing in the porch. Her brother took her in his mighty arms and lifted her off her horse.

He knew her ways. And she said to him, "You must kiss me twice more; for Jim is in India." And he did so, laughing, and held his arm round her waist the while. For there was between those two, the strange unfathomable love of brother and sister. A love which rivals that between mother and son—a love which is mysterious and incalculable; and so we will not say anything more about it.

"Lead her horse away," said the Squire.

"Yes, sir," said young Mordaunt, laughing at his father.

"And *keep* away," said the Squire. Young Mordaunt departed with the

horse; and the Squire began on Ethel.

"Come here, girl."

"I have come."

"I was very angry with you this morning."

"You were."

"John says that I had no reason to be. I am very sorry for it, and I ask your pardon."

"You will break my heart among you," sobbed poor Ethel. "You are all so good to me; and what can I do in return?"

"Why, you can come here," said the sturdy old Squire, opening his arms; and she went there. And for my part, looking at the matter in a practical way, I think that it was the best place she could go to, seeing that Roland was drumming and trumpeting away at Belpore, making Indian night hideous, and rousing the jackals by this process, which the service calls, I believe, changing guard.

Calculating English and Indian time, the Rajah of Bethoor just then looked out of a window, and he said, in Hindustani, "There go the cavalry bugles; Cordery has moved them into the north lines. Hang him; but I will sort him."

And Squire Mordaunt said to Ethel, "Pretty bird, what has *she* told you?"

"She has told me everything. And I will do so no more. I did not know, father; indeed I did not know. I carried that letter from Jim this morning in sheer innocence. I knew nothing, father. Our poor Jim! our poor Jim!"

The Rajah of Bethoor said, pretty nearly at the same time, "I hear your bugle, you scamp. Curse you, there you go with your precious Nawab beside you. Oh! my dear young friends, you James Mordaunt, you have insulted me once, and you are a very dangerous and determined hound. I'll have your life one way or another. You, Nawab, can live."

Said Squire Mordaunt to his daughter, "There is one thing we have never spoken about, child. Do you love Roland?"

And she said "Yes."

Said the Rajah of Bethoor, "There goes the worst and most dangerous man of the whole corps: that Roland Evans. That young wretch has the cunning of a jackal, the courage of a tiger, and the intellect of a Clive. You must die, my dear young man."

Said Squire Mordaunt to Ethel. "It is very well. He is noble and good. I am glad he has escaped the Maynard entanglement. We shall have him home covered with glory soon. And to keep him in memory of us he has our good Jim, and good little Eddy."

Drums and fifes now. A subdivision of the 201st infantry stepping quickly on under the Indian moonlight, with their swift inexorable Roman-like march, to pick up stragglers, see all safe, and generally to do the work of a sergeant's guard: for things were getting so wild and dangerous now, that we must have a commissioned officer at this work: a gentleman responsible, by the risk of social ruin, for anything going wrong; which, in a country like ours, is a terribly strong guarantee.

And, by the side of the subdivision, marches our little Eddy; going swift and direct, well from the hips, with his sword close up to his side in the swivels, in white trousers, white helmet, and blue tunic. A gallant little officer, as self-possessed as when he used to steer the old four-oar, but, liking this work better, seeing, as he said, that it *led* to something.

By a most remarkable circumstance, when he was exactly under that particular window of the Rajah's enormous palace which looked upon the

town, and out of which the Rajah himself was stealthily looking, he cried "Halt!" And they halted, and ordered arms according to Eddy's direction.

"You little devil!" said the Rajah to himself, "you know I am here."

"Sergeant," said Eddy in his airiest tone.

"Yes, sir."

"Akers was not come in when we marched?"

"No, sir."

"I am afraid he is lying drunk in the jungle somewhere. What a pity it is he does such things! I will just go round that bit of jungle before we go to quarters, what do you say?"

"The very best thing possible, sir. There are tigers about."

"Ball cartridge, load!" shouted Eddy, and that having been done, "Quick March!" and this little part of the arrangement called military organization, (which has conquered India, Silesia, Poland, the Southern States, and which is, like brandy or fire, a good servant but a bad master), went swiftly off up the road past the jungle.

The Rajah who had drawn in his head at the word "Ball cartridge" put it out again, and looked after Eddy, swinging along in the moonlight, beside his men.

"You little devil!" said he, "I will broil you alive on hot coals for this insult, and your beloved James Mordaunt, sahib, shall sit and look on."

Aunt Eleanor said to a young man who had come down on agricultural business, and who was going over the farm with her, "tell Mr. Sutton that I shall not preserve my own seed any more. Mine never comes true. I shall buy of you in future. I want to do the best by this farm, because my nephew, Mr. Edward Evans is coming home from India soon, and he will take the management of it."

And so the young man departed to Reading, just as the Rajah of Bethoor had settled down, to smoke himself into a state of contemplative ferocity against Eddy, who, as the last, was the most deeply hated of the men who had insulted him.

Do you say that this is fantastic? If you do, I entirely agree with you. Things *were* fantastic at that time. The most fantastic thing I know, is Hollar's Dance of Death. I doubt that few know that book. To me it is godless, religionless, hopeless. But it is a great book. Nearly the grimmest of all grim forms of Teutonic thought, which is saying something, comes no where near it. In that book, Death is Lord and Master, the beginning and the end.

In this book of Hollar's, Death comes to every one at the finish and end of all things—from the Emperor to the Nun. Hopeless, ghastly, abominable, to one who believes in a future state and the beneficence of God. But fantastic and quaint? undoubtedly so; in these times we might make some fun out of the devils which danced before St. Anthony.

I can make no fun out of it for you. My heart is too sick over it, as the hearts of the best Americans are over *their* war. I only assert that it was fantastic. That two styles of civilization came in contact, like the two poles of a battery. But fantastic *it was*. Why our good Nawab loaded his guns with Eddy's empty jam-pots and the brass headed nails which Aunt Eleanor had sent him to hang up his pictures! *That* is fantastic I fancy.

Was it terrible? Ask the widow with the broad white forehead and the grey hair. She has often told grief to leave that forehead of hers, and not wrinkle it between her eyebrows; but grief sits there on his throne still. Ask *her*. She turns her face to the wall, and weeps afresh. Ask the gentle subdued old Colonel, from whose face, by one dim dark week of horror, every expression has been banished,

save that of an illimitable capacity of undergoing suffering.

It is bright English sunshine, in a beautiful old English garden, and all the County is here, shooting Bow-arrow, and playing Croquet. That is young Lord Thingaby, who is wearing shoes one remarks, and one thinks of shoes oneself, for one likes to look nice. The Poet is here, in his best of humours, and the Beauty lights us all up like a torch, for folks stop conversation to look and admire. That very tall gentleman is Lord Whosee, (I notice that his Lordship's stature is not mentioned either in Debrett's, Burke's, or Walford's peerages, an omission, which I hope will be immediately remedied). In these days of Athletics it is not much to ask; we really ought to have the height, weight, and pace per mile, of every member of the British Peerage, or we shall drift into anarchy. Turn to the name "Jersey" for instance. I have not, because I don't happen to see the books, but I will bet a halfpenny that you get no information on the subject.

There is the Beauty going into the kitchen garden, to show Lord Bobalink (who married Miss Whippoorwill, second cousin as you will remember, doubtless, to Miss Bluebird, in America) the peaches. Lord Bobalink is a rising man, and as good statesman. Lord Bobalink generally knows which way the cat will jump, though *he* invariably jumps the other way. He might do wonders if he would be dishonest. So one goes into the kitchen garden, to see Lord Bobalink, under the peaches on the south wall. But between us and Lord Bobalink, I meet an old man. A man with a smitten face, as if destiny herself had smote him, and it puts Lord Bobalink out of my head. "Colonel," I say, "I want to have a long talk with you about the Indian Mutiny."

"Any other subject," says the bowed-down old Colonel; "you are young and happy, I am old and broken. I will speak to you on any other subject but that. Did you not know my two girls before I sent for them?"

I had forgotten that unutterable horror for one instant. One does forget. But the bright English summer day was turned into dark night, as I walked along behind the Colonel's elbow. The Southern Sun was shining on the peaches, and threw our shadow on them. And as he gave me details, leaving out his own family, our shadow fell upon them and seemed as though it would blight them.

"Fantastic?" Yes. Horrible? Yes. But the Colonel was very quiet over it. "It was Dacoitee on our part you know. We had not any business there by the law of nations. Yet if it had not been for sheer Dacoitee, where would have been the English, French, Prussian, Austrian, or American nation, now?

I couldn't answer the Colonel, and what is more, I cannot now. Dacoitee is undefinable. The removing of the Choctaws from Florida to Dacotah, would be considered a pretty strong example of Dacoitee, by some folks, if it had not been done by a Nation of Angels, whose founder, George Washington, was a slave-owner, and whose Poet-Laureate takes every opportunity of snubbing us on such points, the removal of the Acadian's for instance. *N'importe.* My say is only this, that the Indian Mutiny, bringing together, as it did, two very different civilizations, was a very fantastic business.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE SQUIRE MORDAUNT.

It so happened, in the course of accidents, that Squire Mordaunt should be riding along a Shropshire lane, abutting on his own property, and thinking; a not very improbable incident. It moreover happened that

it was Thursday afternoon, which again, on the face of it, is not absolutely impossible. Furthermore, he was thinking whether it would not be better for him to give up the home farm, which, considering he was losing a cool £500 a year on it, is not one of those incidents in fiction which, all things considered, can be classed as sensational.

He was aroused from his reverie, the result of which was that he wondered how old Eleanor did it, by hearing a hymn sung by a few women; and finding himself in front of a red brick dissenting chapel, he with a bull-dog promptitude, which was part of his nature, drew up, and said, "Oh, *here* you are!"

There was a stony-looking, hammer-headed cob, of a colour so quaint that it would take fifty Burne Jones' to reproduce it, tied to the rails—a cob as utterly unlike the article known at Aldridge's as a bishop's cob as it was possible to conceive. Any bishop who had been seen riding on such a hammer-headed, straight-shouldered, low-fetlocked, low-crested beast, would have had a brotherly admonition from certainly the late Archbishop of York, who knew a cob when he saw one, and who knew how to do his Christian work among the Yorkshire wolds on one also.

Squire Mordaunt got off and tied his horse to the rails of the dissenting chapel, as far from this fearful dun-grey coloured "pony" (as he called it) as possible. Then with his whip behind his back, he stood and looked at him for a few minutes, and at the end said,

"You are a ramshackle brute. But you have a kindly eye, and get through I don't doubt a deal of work. I am going in to hear your master."

The horse made no remark whatever.

Big, burly, Squire Mordaunt, dressed in grey, with breeches and gaiters, a sturdy inexorable figure, stepped into the door, and stood beside an old woman. There were only a few old men, nearly past work, and labourers' wives in there. His old trained eye told him why. A mere Popish priest in a hard-worked neighbourhood, will tell you why labouring *men* are so difficult to get to Church.

The hymn was not half over, and the Squire nudging the old woman next him, took a half of her trembling hymn-book, and what is more, sung out lustily, like a good old Briton as he was. The old woman owed him thirteen weeks' rent, and he had told her that he would turn her out if she didn't come to Church. Now he found her here, and she trembled in her shoes. And she and the Squire finished the hymn together.

Talking in places of public worship is most objectionable. But when the Squire and this old woman sat down after the hymn, they began to talk: let us hope it will be forgiven them.

The Squire said in a whisper, behind his hand. "I am glad to see you here. I thought you went nowhere."

She whispered, "I am two mile from Church, and look at my shoes." And she pulled up her old petticoats to show them.

The Squire whispered, "All right. Never mind about the rent, *I* don't want it. And come up to Macgillavray, he shall give you your seed-potatoes. You shall have York Regents, old girl. Don't cut them, plant 'em whole."

This scandalous and indecent conversation was brought to a stop by a dead silence on the part of the whole congregation. Squire Mordaunt scarcely improved his scandalous position by saying in a loud voice, to the officiating minister.

"I beg pardon, sir. Pray go on."

The officiating minister went on. It was Allan Gray, looking more like a bloodhound than ever, with the deep loving eyes, yet with the potential ferocity of the bloodhound also.

He began his sermon. And from the first moment he began, Squire Mordaunt began to listen.

His text was "I have other sheep not of this fold." And he began to handle *that*. Did it mean the Seven Churches? It appeared to mean more than that to him. And while he was on the subject of the Seven Churches he took the opportunity to go in for a furious, wild, attack on the Church of Thyatira, which he said had never existed until fifty years after Saint John's death.

Whereupon the Squire said to *himself:* "You are cutting your Scriptures to pieces are you. Young man, did you ever hear of such a place as Rome? With your craving for dogmatism, and your distrust of revelation, you'll be a Papist in two years, if you don't mind."

He was not a Papist at present, however. He enlarged on his theme. Other sheep. Which? Dissenters of all kinds, doubtless. Men who, like Professor X and Professor Y, were trying to find out God by their own lights. Doubtless these also. Inhabitants of other planets? There was little doubt, but that they were meant by the sheep of the other fold. The moon, as had been so well proved by the late Mr. Copeland, now dead thirty years, but uncontradicted, was the Hell, Hell, the concealed place, the place of departed Spirits, before their final judgment—

"Purgatory"—growled the Squire.

He could not agree with the late Mr. Copeland, advocate, that the sun was the place of eternal torture for 729,000,000, out of 800,000,000, on the face of the globe. He was however perfectly certain that the 120,000,000 of Papists, and Anglicans who imitated Rome, would be either in the sun or further, very soon.

This was a hit out at Squire Mordaunt, who had given his living to a well known Broad Churchman. Who had furthermore increased his sins by having (as churchwarden) encouraged decorations in the Church. The Dean of Saint Paul's was well known as a learned man, of lax views, in one point declaring that *he* in *his* way believed in the Real Presence, with a strong tendency to ceremonialism. The women and the old men did not understand it at all. It was Greek to them.

"That man will be at Rome in a year. He is unable to see the points of the question. I wonder what the effect on the estate would be if I sent him to Rome. I have a good mind to send for old Father Jones. That man is hungering after dogmas. Upon my word and honour I have a good mind to do it."

But at this time the sermon was concluded, and the old woman to whom Mordaunt had forgiven her rent, woke up and dropped her reticule, her pattens, and her umbrella. "After all," said Squire Mordaunt, "we are both of us only talking to old women." Which was, in one sense certainly, true.

The service was over, and the Squire went out, waiting for the man we will call Allan Gray. He joined the Squire in the road. And the Squire said, "South-east."

Allan Gray said, "Why, my good sir?"

"Rome," said the Squire.

"No," said Allan, so quietly and good-naturedly, that the Squire was disarmed at once. "I do not think it will come to that. I see that you understand me, but it will not come to that. I grope in the dark. You are wise there Mr. Mordaunt, but it will never come to that with me. I have a guider who never errs."

"His name?" said Squire Mordaunt.

"Love," said Allan. "Love is the fulfilling of the law."

This was rather Greek to the good Squire, shrewd as he was. He said, "Do you mean?"

"I mean Eddy Evans, my half-brother. In all history, I think there was never any one like him. I am bound to believe in original sin, but that boy never committed it. That is the question between myself and God. That boy Eddy has to suffer for original sin, in everlasting torment, but he never committed it."

"My good young man," said Squire Mordaunt; "Do go to Rome. Their formulas are far less horrible than yours. I can't understand why the deuce you fellows *don't* go to Rome."

Allan treated the square Squire with lofty scorn. He did not take up the argument. He continued.

"These attorneys, these Somes have arranged all the details of the compromise between myself and my father's estate. I mention this fact to you as my father's trustee. They will pay me money in two months' time. That will enable me to sail by the Burrumpooter, May I ask, as a special favour, that you will receive me whilst I am here."

"Receive you? Certainly. You are a good young man. Sail by the Burrumpooter. What do you mean?"

"I am going to India in two months, sir. Eddy Evans wants guidance, and there is much to do there. Eddy Evans, whom I now know as my brother, I always wondered why I loved him so well, has been through many religious experiences with me. I am going after him."

"Well, don't turn him Papist, young man," said the Squire, "because that is the way you are going just now."

CHAPTER XLIV.

MISS EVANS had, indeed, done far more than she ever meant by her one act of thoughtless spite. Poor Allan Gray was terribly smitten with our good friend Ethel; and at the same time, being neither wanting in brains or fine feeling, he was aware that it was in the highest degree improbable that he would ever make the least impression upon her.

They were so utterly different in ways of life and in ways of thought. She a lady of an old house: he not used to the rank of life in which she had always lived; she a churchwoman of the highest, he a dissenter of the lowest; she trained in all field exercises, he a thorough Cockney as ever was bred, considering foxhunting and horseracing sinful. He was perfectly determined never to palter with any one of his principles, but to remain exactly as he was then. He knew, therefore, that he had no hope of Ethel.

Yet he met her very often indeed, and talked very much with her. He was so very respectful, and so very distant, that she never guessed the state of the poor youth's heart, and by degrees got to like him.

How came they to be thrown together? One of the first people who took up Allan with the greatest *empressement* was Mrs. Maynard. She begged him to come to see them, and he did so.

She was as sharp and as keen a woman as any in broad Shropshire. She had not seen Ethel and Allan together twice, before she knew his secret.

Such an opportunity of annoying Miss Evans, and, possibly, of getting Miss Ethel well talked about, was not to be lost for a moment. She acted perfectly; begging Ethel to come as often as she could, and sit with Mildred, who was now getting very ailing indeed. Ethel could not have helped it even had she wanted; but, indeed, she liked very much to have pretty little Mildred with her, and see her brighten up while she prattled by the hour about Roland, a theme on which poor Ethel never tired. So it came that Allan and Ethel saw a great deal of one another, and that Miss

Evans knew nothing about it, as she avoided Mrs. Maynard like poison, and left her to accumulate more atrocities for the day of reckoning, which Miss Evans dimly saw would come between her and "that woman" some time or another.

The household there seemed outwardly happy, but there was still a sad cloud between Mildred and her good-natured husband. He was devotedly kind to her—kinder than ever now that she was getting near to be a mother. Besides, before Ethel or Allan, it was quite impossible to hint at any domestic trouble. The household was a very pleasant one to Allan, and, you may depend upon it, Mrs. Maynard was civil enough. Allan thought her the nicest lady he had ever known, and showed it so very plainly, that Mrs. Maynard once, for a single instant, thought whether she had not been rather precipitate in shelving herself as an old widow, and whether it would still be worth while to get converted by Allan, with a view to matrimony. He was six-and-twenty to thirty, and she was forty to five-and-forty, without a grey hair in her head. It was in her mind and out of it again, and although she never exactly acted on it, she became extremely Low Church, and started a Mary Stuart cap, which, as being the cap which has played more mischief with the minds of men in all history, than another cap, she argued, was the proper thing under the circumstances. She might as well have worn Elizabeth's best ruff, for all the effect she was likely to produce at present. At the same time, her John Knox might meet with a heart accident, and might want consoling some day, and that would be easier done in the Mary Stuart cap after all.

All hints and allusions of any tenderness between Roland and Ethel, she, of course, very carefully suppressed. Miss Evans she kept at a safe distance by continually sending her fulsomely loving and flattering messages. She well knew that good lady's humour. "I don't mind her so much when she shows fight," said Aunt Eleanor; "but when she takes to soft-soaping, I cannot bear the sight of her," which Mrs. Maynard unhappily well knew.

I said Ethel got to like him. She did so very much, and found him a most intelligent and agreeable companion. His settled intention of going to India, so frequently expressed, combined with her perfect unconsciousness, and his almost haughtily careful reserve towards her, enabled her to be very good friends with him, without her even suspecting how he felt towards her. And when all was said and done, was he not Roland's elder brother?

She praised very highly his project of going to India, and sketched for him her brother Jim's character, in which he was represented as being as brave as Picton, and as good as Collingwood. Allan promised to cultivate that gentleman's acquaintance, but said nothing whatever about the extremely unfavourable opinion he had conceived of him on board the transport ship and elsewhere.

Mrs. Maynard's other great scheme did not seem to prosper at all. Sir Jasper Meredith, having taken council with young Somes, proceeded immediately to the second Cataract of the River Nile, and would probably have pushed up as far as Debonos, or even Kamrasis, had not the management of his affairs imperatively called him back to England. Considerable additional wealth had fallen to him by the death of a very largely dowered aunt, and he had not been at Lawley a week before Mrs. Maynard was upon him.

He was utterly alone, and unprotected. Even the elder Mordaunt must be at Shrewsbury races. She came over in her son's carriage, and when the door was opened she merely walked in, and, with her pocket-

handkerchief in her hand, requested to see Sir Jasper Meredith.

"How d'ye do, my dear Jasper?" she began. "We have been nearly out of our senses with worry and anxiety about you, Never to write one word! I tell you the truth, I gave you up for lost. I said, 'He is drowned.' Those were my very words, 'He is drowned.' Poor Mary instantly fainted away, and then I had seen what a very foolish thing I had done in yielding to my convictions, and breaking them to her without preparation."

"I am sorry Miss Maynard was so very much upset," croaked Sir Jasper, in his most raven-like tone.

"Ah! You don't know what that child's feelings are. She will give you a deal of trouble if you don't mind."

"Confound her, she is doing it already," thought Sir Jasper. "How the deuce am I to get out of this." "We had a very pleasant tour, Mrs. Maynard. I am sorry I was not longer, but the river got low, and I came into Pleachmore and Spinsterwood, and I came home by Paris. I spent some money there."

"Ah, you young men! You young men! You will be gay. Yes! yes!"

Sir Jasper caught her eye, and looked down on his withered, wasted, ruined body with an indignation akin to fury, but well concealed. She saw she had gone too far.

"I was not very gay," he said. "A miserable heap of ruined hopes like myself, much better dead, is not likely to be gay. I spent some money in some jewels which I fancied, and I thought——" He rang the bell, and gave his servant a key and a direction, and the man, opening a bureau, took out a large morocco case, and went away.

"I rather thought that they would suit your complexion, my dear madam. Pray try them, and if they suit you, keep them."

Oh, she *was* so delighted. It was so *kind*, so *thoughtful*, so *good*, to think of the poor old woman. She thought of gushingly kissing him, but he looked so exceedingly dangerous, and shortly afterwards took her leave, insisting that she could not give him one day more without coming to see Mary.

She opened her jewel-case in the carriage once more. "If you are going to pay this price every time you wish to avoid a disagreeable conversation, my little friend, I shall not trouble you much for a very long time. I will work you, my friend."

And the moment she was gone, young Somes, the lawyer, came *into* the room, and said.

"Did she take the jewels, Sir Jasper?"

"Like a trout takes a May-fly."

"That is well. We have a hold on her now. She will deny the bribe now. I am afraid they were real."

"Four thousand francs worth."

"Hang it," said Somes; "I wish you had got Palais Royal. She'd never have known it. One hundred and sixty pounds on her. Never mind. We are all right. We have bribed her far enough if she gives us trouble to tell her son. Here is my father with the leases." And in toddled old Mr. Somes, the attorney, with the leases.

"Leases; you may well say leases, you two," said the gentle old man. "You have been 'leasing,' I doubt. "My boy, Sir Jasper," continued the old attorney, looking affectionately at his son, "would not have his health if he did not keep business out of his father's office. I might have made £6,000 or £8,000 out of the Evans' succession business, but he stopped it. And now he is doing his best to put an end to the best breach of promise case I have seen for years."

"I have a good mind to marry the girl," said Sir Jasper. "I can't live long, and, to tell the truth, don't want

to. She is a fool, and I don't like her; but if her being my nominal wife, with a large settlement, would get her out of the hands of that woman, I am not at all sure that it would not be right to do so. She would expand and develop into something better and nobler if she was rich and free; and she is good-looking, and good-natured."

But the Somes' would not hear of that for a moment, and hoisted up the poor little anatomy to sign his leases, Somes, the elder, suggesting to him that one way out of the business would be to marry the mother, which made Sir Jasper laugh till all his bones ached worse than usual.

"After all," he said, "seriously, between us all, is it not shameful and ghastly beyond measure, for that woman to propose to sell her daughter to such an awful object as myself?"

"Shameful!" said young Somes, sitting down suddenly beside him, putting his arm round his neck, and stroking his hair. "Yet, if women were all they pretended to be, I can conceive of a certain kind of woman being as happy as the day is long as Jasper Meredith's wife."

"Ah!" said Sir Jasper Meredith, with a deep sigh and a catch in his breath; "I would make a good woman *so* happy."

CHAPTER XLV.

THE elder Somes was seized with an irritation of the mucous membrane which required him to blow his nose, but he was quite up to the occasion. "Ah!" he said, "you have lost a good chance, Sir Jasper. There is a lady riding up the avenue now who would have had you if you had thrown into her settlements the pasture on Lawley hill. Miss Evans. But you are out of the market there, sir; here is the late Dean of St. Paul's, our new Rector, your old master, riding with her. She seems to be blowing him up, which with her means a dangerous degree of affection. When *she* gets cool to you, you may always know that you are on her bad books."

"Lift me up and let me see them," said Sir Jasper, eagerly. "I wish she had come when Mrs. Maynard was here. What fun it would have been."

"We shall oblige her, before you are out of this scrape," said young Somes. "Here she comes."

In front of the terrace at Lawley there was an iron gate, and as no servant happened to be looking out of the window at that moment, none of the men went down to open it.

Our three friends who were looking out of window were considerably amused. The Dean (as we will still call him) came forward to open it as a matter of course, but Aunt Eleanor waved him back, saying that she made a point of opening gates for herself, which, in a way, she did. She was on the cob which during seven years had never allowed her to open one single gate from his back, but she recommenced the seven years' war without one moment's hesitation. The iron gate was Silesia and she was Marie Therèse: she went into the seventh year of the war without an instant's hesitation, and hooked at the latch with the hooked end of her riding whip. As soon as she had got tight hold of it, the cob (representing let us say the King of Prussia,) backed across the grass to the left, (into Saxony shall we say?) and it became evident that she must either be pulled off her horse, or let go her whip. She did the latter alternative, and as usual, dismounted, opened the gate and led her cob through.

But the gate went to right against the nose of the Dean's horse (who may be said with somewhat singular felicity to have represented the nation of France, so admirably represented in all its aspirations, as it turned out a few years after, by Louis XV.) However, the Dean's cob, being an

ecclesiastical cob, used to the buffetings of this wicked world, took no exception to having three hundredweight of iron sent slam against his nose, and allowed the Dean to open the gate. In a very short time Miss Evans and the Dean were shown into Sir Jasper Meredith's library.

"How d'ye do, Jasper?" she said. "My dear child, you don't look a bit better for your Nile trip. You look as if you had been half swallowed by a crocodile. I will tell you what I shall have to do with you, young man. I shall have to take you over to Pulverbatch and nurse you up. I shall also have to look after your property for you, if you go on trusting to the advice of these two Somes; they will rob you to that extent that you will die a miserable outlawed old exile at Boulogne. How are you two?"

They said smiling that they were quite well.

"That's a comfort," said Aunt Eleanor. "I am glad that some good people are flourishing, you never come near me. If I was the dirt under your feet you couldn't treat me worse than you do. Why you, Somes the elder, you are as old as I am."

"I am old enough to be your grandfather, Miss Evans," said the old man.

"That only makes it worse," said Aunt Eleanor. "You, old Somes, respected and loved in the valley so many years: the father of the valley, the healer of dissensions when you might make money by them; a man I have known all my life, never come near me now. Don't you know that when there is not welcome for you at Pulverbatch, I wish that Pulverbatch may come down and crush me. As for you, young sir, I don't understand you. You have let your whiskers grow long, and turned barrister. However, you come of a good stock, and we will try to hope for the best.

The Dean remarked that he was at a loss to conceive what on earth Mr. Somes' whiskers had to do with the argument in hand; and that the talking of sheer nonsense "was like the letting out of waters."

Aunt Eleanor stopped directly, with a glance at him. His pertinent caustic impertinence (impertinence in the second intention *he* chose to call it.) had pulled her up in her most fantastic moods more than once since they had been together. She instantly ranged into a subject which she conceived foreign to him.

"I came here on a rather unpleasant errand to-day, Jasper," she said. "Your bailiff offered me two hundred and fifty bushels of fluke kidney potatoes, and one half of them are York regents."

"I'll hang him on the day after tomorrow," said Sir Jasper.

"Thanks very much," said Aunt Eleanor. "I will ride over and see the execution. Send over the fresh two hundred and fifty bushels tonight, and I will not prosecute you for swindling. As a matter of course I am letting you down easy, and shall pay you nothing. Now, Rector, if you will get my horse I will go."

The Dean and she rode away, and the three looked at them out of window.

"Why did she come here?" said old Somes.

"She had something to say to Sir Jasper which she wouldn't say before us," said young Somes.

"I wonder what it was?" said old Somes.

"I don't," said young Somes. "It is about Maynard and his wife and young John Mordaunt. That old woman Maynard ought to be put a stop to. She has been making mischief *there*, to keep a hold in the house. I never heard of such a persistent evil as that old woman exhibits. Evil speaking, lying, and slandering. There is no good about her at all."

They stood watching Aunt Eleanor

down the avenue beside the late Dean of St. Paul's.

"Will those two make a match of it?" remarked old Somes.

"You are a better judge than I," said young Somes. "They are very old, but I don't see why they should not."

"They quarrel a deal," said old Somes.

"No, father, they don't. She is dead afraid of him. He lets her talk her nonsense to a certain point, and then he drops in and shuts her up. She has met her master."

"That," said Sir Jasper moving himself, "is very singular. The Dean of St. Paul's is a man of the cloister, of the lecture room, of the common room. He can know nothing of women."

"He has been used to manage boys of from eighteen to twenty however," replied young Somes, "and they are pretty much like average women."

"But Miss Evans is not an average woman," said Sir Jasper. "She is wiser than most men. Wiser than the Dean in the ways of the world."

"Possibly," said young Somes. "But then, don't you see, the Dean has learnt logic and she hasn't. So he can leave her to make a fool of herself and then pick her up sharp and sudden, and that so to speak flabbergasts her. Besides he is a strong man on all points. He is master: and if she marries him, she will find it out. He will be master. Tongue is not strength. See what a fool that woman makes of herself about young Eddy Evans. And then again, see what a fool she makes of herself about Ethel Mordaunt. If Miss Mordaunt were to cry for anything to-morrow, she would sell a hundred acres to give it to her. That woman is not a strong woman, her heart is too good."

"Is Mrs. Maynard a 'strong' woman?" asked Sir Jasper, laughing. "I mean stronger than Miss Evans."

"The Maynard has the most brains. But she is a coward and a liar," replied young Somes.

CHAPTER XLVI.

SO Allan spent the two months with Ethel. Mrs. Maynard growing more and more certain every day that he was going to make a fool of himself, and Allan getting more and more certain that he was not.

I doubt whether a man of good disposition and high character like Allan Gray, is very unhappy under a hopeless passion. Men with a craze in their brain will go as far as to hang themselves, but in those cases I doubt the man's being in love at all in the sense I speak of. Such admiration is more physical than mental, I suspect. I have heard of more than one Colonel Dobbin.

Allan had never been on such good terms with a highly educated, high-spirited lady before, and he found it, like the rest of the world, extremely charming. Thrown together more and more, by Mrs. Maynard's plotting, and their growing liking for one another, they became very fast friends, and very confidential indeed, save on two points; Ethel seldom named Roland, and Allan never for an instant, by word or look let Ethel think that he admired her.

Miss Evans' dislike for this young man was so well known to Ethel, that she scarcely ever mentioned his name. And consequently their intimacy was quite unknown.

Ethel talked much with him about his plan of going to India. He was connected it seemed, with some missionary society, whose speciality was India—I believe a German Society. He had offered to go out and see how they were doing, but he did not conceal from her that now it was definitively allowed, and he had settled in his mind that Eddy was his brother, he had felt an absolute craving to see more of him. He told her that he never could conceive what attracted him so much towards that young man.

"You had not the same feeling towards his brother, had you?" said Ethel.

He was thoughtful for a time. "Why, no. I cannot say that *I* had. I cannot tell in the least degree why. He is, I believe, everything which is noble, but he is so very—I don't know—handsome, elegant, accomplished, successful."

"Are those faults?"

"They jar upon me. It is a *fault* in my nature I know, but they *do* jar upon me. It *is* painful for a man of somewhat high aspirations to feel his inferiority. Just think too how my brother Roland is employed. It is terrible to think of talents and gifts so wasted."

"Civilizing India. Stopping Suttee and other abominations; training himself to be a governor of men, a satrap of the greatest power on earth: defending the outposts of advancing railways and canals, making tanks and other low dirty work of the kind. Yes, miserable work indeed."

This was rather sharp, but there was a good deal of truth in it after all said and done. One of the finest things done in the Indian mutiny, was that fight which Mr. G. O.

Trevelyan tells us of. *On a railway embankment.*

Ethel having got her advantage, pursued it for her own low ends. "Dear Mr. Evans," she said, "I want to ask one thing of you as a *very great* favour."

"Anything in reason, Miss Mordaunt."

"Don't on any account use your influence to induce Edward to leave the army. It would give fatal offence to every one."

"I never dreamt of doing such a thing for an instant," said Allan. "Many godly men have carried arms before now."

Ethel ran over a few, beginning with the Centurion, and ending with Cromwell, and then pursuing her advantage, got him to promise that he would be gentle and friendly with all three, and not obtrude his opinions on them too strongly. On behalf of her brother, she made a special appeal.

"If you knew what a noble creature he was," she said, "you would love him as I do: you will not suit one another, I fear. But, dear Mr. Evans, for *my* sake be kind and gentle to him; he is wild and fantastic, but try to bear with that; and above all, do not interfere in his friendship with Eddy; it is the thing which keeps him from evil more than any other. I pray you, as the last prayer I shall make you, not to come between those two."

Allan said not one word, but he took her hand and kissed it; one of the deepest and best kept vows ever registered, was sworn by Allan Evans at that instant.

Not another word was said between them. Ethel tried to speak, but broke down, and he went away, for it was to be their last meeting. And he went at noon the next day.

As he passed through the hall, Mrs. Maynard slipped out, and said, "You look low; you have surely not been asking a question and had a refusal. Surely—"

"No," said Allan.

"Give my love to Roland," she said, "and tell him that his love is true and constant."

"Who is his true love?" said Allan.

"Did not you know he was engaged to be married to Ethel Mordaunt, and that she worships the ground he treads on? Good-bye. Dear me. Good-bye."

CHAPTER XLVII.

ALLAN having long known that it was not himself, was not very terribly put out of the way when he found who it was; never having had a thought for himself, but having merely fallen in love haphazard, he could not in the least degree see why he, so utterly unsuited for her, should take her from Roland, who seemed to him exactly suited for her. But he was desperately in love with her nevertheless.

He was to go from Shrewsbury by the twelve o'clock train, and he had got a cart to take his luggage for him, and would himself walk. He was on the road, with Caradoc, Lawley, and Longmynd getting dim behind him, when he was aware of a young lady scouring swiftly on horseback across a grass field towards him. This young lady looked for a gap in the hedge (there *was* one, it being off Aunt Eleanor's farm), but she did not see it, and leaning back, topped her horse across it on to the footpath, about forty yards before him. Then she dismounted and waited for him, and when he came up, she said, "I have caught you."

"I am so glad to see you once more, Miss Mordaunt," he said, "so very, very glad. You are the last made of all my friends, and really I think the dearest."

"I am so glad of that. I was in

hopes you would like me. See here —see how I am going to trust you," and she looped up her habit under her arm and walked beside him, leading her horse.

"I want you to give this letter into my brother Jim's own hand. It is heavy you see," she added, looking at him. "There is another letter inside. You will give it him safe, will you not?"

"Through fire and water. Through hell and beyond," was the singular, quiet reply.

"My dear sir, what are you saying?" said Ethel, startled.

"I beg pardon. I mope too much I doubt, and forget the value of words. Those words had meaning to me."

Ethel said good-bye! and he said good-bye. And taking the letter, walked away down the bright white road, leaving Ethel standing on the path holding her horse, and looking after him.

He turned once and looked back, waving his hand. She stood there still like a statue, and waved her hand to him; then a turn in the road hid him from her, and he was gone.

This happened to be a difficult day with Aunt Eleanor. She was making up her accounts, which always exasperated her, and the Dean had not come, as he said he would. The figures refused point-blank to add up, or multiply, or do anything else; except exhibit new properties in numbers utterly unknown to those effete Sciolists at Cambridge. She was very cross, and had inked her nose. She had foolishly sold her mangold, tempted by very high prices that year, but the season had been so bad that prices had risen, and she had had to buy for her own beasts at a loss. Meanwhile, the original man who bought the mangold had never paid her. And she wanted her money without selling out of the funds, for every sixpence she made, not sent to Eddy, was bought in at any price. She wanted that sixty-eight pounds because she had got it into her head —goodness knows how—that Eddy ought to give Jim's friend the Nawab a present of jewellery, (he could have fitted out Mr. Harry Emmanuel). "Those heathens love that kind of thing," was all the explanation she chose to give to the Dean.

She was looking out of window with an inky nose, when she saw Ethel come up to the door leading her horse by the bridle. She rang the bell three times for her groom, and ran to the door herself.

"What is the matter, child? has he been down with you? Are you hurt?"

"No," she said, "but I did not think of getting on him. I quite forgot him." And she followed Aunt Eleanor into the sitting-room, and casting herself down on the sofa, hid her face.

Aunt Eleanor went on with her accounts with a scared face. Two and two had persistently made five before, but now they made $x + 5^{th}$. There was an unknown quantity in the room certainly. Ethel looked old and harried; she looked pale, wan, wild, and—come, out with the word —fierce. She looked like her brother Jim at his worst; and if ever sheer absolute terror was in the heart of an honest, brave old woman, it was in the heart of Aunt Eleanor at that time.

"Ethel!"

"Leave me alone! Leave me alone!"

"But Ethel dear!"

"Why do I not die? Why did God gift me with this splendid beauty, of which I am so perfectly conscious, that I might only work misery? Let me alone."

There was a very short pause, after which Aunt Eleanor rose, and, in a loud voice, said—

"Ethel, you must speak. If you and I lived alone together, we should madden one another with our reticence. We have both the same horrible habit. In Heaven's name, girl, tell me what is the matter. I will confess my sin to you, and you shall make me kiss the floor for it."

"I have no charge against you, Miss Evans," said Ethel. "You have always been my best and most dearly loved friend. My story is soon told. I have won the heart of a noble man, and I have broken his."

"Whose?"

"Allan Evans's."

"Has he spoken to you?" said Miss Evans, almost in a whisper.

"No; he is too leal, too loyal, too noble, too gallant for *that*," replied Ethel. "He was gentleman enough to see that I gave him no reason to speak to me; but when he left me this morning, I saw it all."

"How did you see it?"

"By an expression in his face, only for one instant. *You*, with your beauty, must have seen that more than once; and an expression in his mouth so unlike his usual religiousness that I rebuked him for it."

"Go on," said Aunt Eleanor.

Ethel sat up, pale and wild, on the sofa.

"I will tell you everything. Don't desert me. I know that Roland loves me; but he has not written to me anything more than formalities. He thinks that his change from elder to younger son should make a difference. And I wrote him a letter, containing a great deal more than mere formalities. And I gave it to Allan Evans to take to him. And he knew what he was doing. Allan looked me in the face, and showed me that he knew for whom the letter was. But he will deliver it. If all the banded fiends which you make me read about in Milton, were to oppose him, he would carry that letter safe through. He promised in words strange to him."

"What were his words?"

"I cannot repeat them."

"Will you write them down?"

"I dare do as much as that for you; but you must leave me alone afterwards."

Aunt Eleanor took the sheet of note-paper which Ethel gave her, and read—

"Through fire and water; through hell, and beyond it."

She was very serious and deeply grieved. She never thought it would have gone as far as this. She said to Ethel—

"See here, my dear, comfortable and quiet. I am going out on the farm."

Now this was a statement which, had it been uttered by Mrs. Maynard, Aunt Eleanor would have called "another of them," meaning another outrageous story; for she was not going on the farm at all, but just rode over to tell the whole story to the Dean of St. Paul's, the Rector.

He merely nodded his head until he came to the fact that she had introduced Allan and Ethel to one another, with a distinct view of plaguing Allan. Then he rose and gave it to her.

"You must have been out of your mind. That is one of the wickedest things I ever heard of in my life. You ought to be entirely and utterly ashamed of yourself. If a man were to do such a thing, he would be chased from society."

"I have confessed my sin."

"What is the use of confessing your particular sin, after doing your best to ruin two lives, and having succeeded in ruining one? Why did you do so?"

"It pleased me," said Aunt Eleanor, sulkily.

"Yes; I have pricked your conscience too deep, and you retire on your womanhood. Go home and look after that girl; the boy is past looking after."

The agricultural labourers said that "the new Rector were a-courtin' Miss Evans, and they would soon make a match of it."

Squire Mordaunt said that "the new Rector and old Eleanor had had such a violent squabble, that he expected the announcement of their wedding would come off in a fortnight.

The Rajah of Bethoor said, "Curse the young fools! They never sleep. But, sleep or wake, I am a match for them. I will have the two Evanses and that Mordaunt."

And our Nawab said, "He has no real claim against you; he was but an adopted Mameluke. Jim, my dear, why did you prevent my cutting his throat when I had the chance? Never mind, child, we will have a fight together before we die."

And the dean wrote a sixty-guinea article in the great half-yearly review, giving a history of the settlement of India by the English, and wound up by pointing out that in the remotest end of furthest contingencies, it was possible that the conquered race might attempt to assert their superiority.

And keen-eyed little Eddy noted all things. And one night, there being many native attendants about, he took it into his head to raise his brother's mosquito curtains, and slip into bed beside Roland. And Roland heard many things, in a night's whispering, which he had never heard before, gotten from the Nawab to Jim, and from Jim to Eddy.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE arrival of our young friend, Edward, did not make much difference at the station at Belpore. Roland's men had seen him at Chatham, and he was welcomed by them as a great accession. Add to this, that everything was perfectly quiet again. There had been dreadful jangling at one time among the native troops about the cartridges, but Colonel Cordery had got together the havildars of the free native regiments, both Mussulman and Brahmin, and had had a great talk with them. He pointed out to them that he was not in command, and that this was entirely an unofficial meeting. He would give them his word of honour, as an English gentleman, that there was nothing worse than bees'-wax on the cartridges, and that the idea that the English wished to insult the Mussulmans, and degrade the caste of the Brahmins, by making them bite cartridges greased with pork fat, or beef fat, was the wildest moonshine which ever entered into the mind of man. The Brigadier Sahib had told them so, but they would not believe him. He appealed to all our former policy in India, and begged them not to make fools of themselves.

When Colonel Cordery had done speaking, a tall man, who had been leaning over his chair as he sat, began to speak. It was the Nawab.

"Listen to me," he said. "Am I a high-class Brahmin? Have I in any way ever broken my caste?"

There were salaams, and a universal murmur of assent and admiration from the havildars, for our Nawab was known not only for his strict religion, but also for his vast charity and good-nature.*

* Of course my readers will see that the relations between the Nawab of Belpore and the Rajah of Bethoor are a dim shadow of those between the Nawab of Cawnpore and the would-be Jaghire of Bhithoor, who lives in men's mouths as Nana Sahib—verily his deeds live after him. To refresh some memories, allow me to mention that, even after the rejection of his claim to the Rajahship by the British Government, he still retained the money left by Bajee Rao, amounting to above *four millions sterling*. He had no claim to the title. He was an adopted son of the Pishwa—a Mameluke. Belpore is situated at the junction of the Indus and the Ganges, close to the ancient Mogul capital of Caracorum. It is to be noticed that Gibbon spells the name of this

"Here is one of those very cartridges. Look at me. I believe as you do: is there one who dares say I do not?" and he put the cartridge in his mouth.

It seems to us now a slight act. It was a very important one, however. The Mussulmans thought they were being insulted, and the Brahmins thought that they were incurring everlasting damnation, by biting these cartridges. Here was a well-known Brahmin staking, as the Brahmins thought, his soul by biting one. They were satisfied for the time.

Was it midsummer madness? Undoubtedly so. But have not nations more often maddened themselves on the subject of religion than on any other? Sheer folly! Why, no. A nation, or a portion of a people, who will fight for their faith, says in effect, "we believe in a future state, under conditions, and our life here is not half so valuable as our life there. Consequently, we prefer to die, sooner than forego certain conditions, which we believe to be necessary to the life everlasting." Jews have said so; witness Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Papists have said so; witnesses Capuchins and Jesuits, innumerable. Anglicans have said so; witness the little cross on the pavement before Balliol College, where Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer were burnt. Ultra Protestants have said so; what Claverhouse saw and heard when he came crushing through the heather under Wardlaw will tell you that. Yet a people, a section of which will not die for their faith, are but dead dogs, and should die as such.

It is a matter very dim and very hard to get at, this feeling of the *Brahmins* towards us. Liars were abroad, like the Rajah of Bethoor, who told them that these cartridges were purposely invented to make them lose caste and incur damnation. It was a lie, an outrageous and wicked lie, but they believed it. Conceive any *man*, confessing any form of Christianity, being asked to insult the sacred elements to save his life. Yet it came to that with them.

I find none like my Shakespeare. He makes Nym (Nehmen, the man who *takes*) steal everything he can lay his hands upon, until at last he rises to the summit and head of stealing, by taking what?—a pyx. He could not even keep his hands off *that*, and was hung. These men believed, through such rascals as Nana Sahib, that we had stolen *their* pyx, and they desired to hang us. Now that blood is cool, one dares say so much.

But the effect of the Nawab's biting the cartridge was very great. Such perfect peace and harmony was restored that all went merry as a marriage bell, until Allan Gray's—I beg his pardon, Allan Evans'—arrival. There was a great lull. The men were reassured, and the best of them contrasted the lives of the Brigadier-Sahib and the Nawab with that of the Rajah, not by any means to the Rajah's advantage.

The Major, extremely Low Church, continued his Bible classes and his churches among the Pariahs, and those whom he could influence, and the Roman Catholic missionary and the German-Lutheran missionary worked away with a will. The Major told the Nawab, the Havildars, the Subadhars, the Brigadier, Colonel Cordery of her Majesty's army, Jim Mordaunt, Eddy Evans, the Roman Catholic missionary, in fact every one

last-mentioned city with a C, but most later authorities with a K. Why? While we are at useful information, it is worthy of remark, that the old King of Delhi, whom Dr. Russell saw being sick into a brass basin, and who told the doctor the thundering lie that he had filled eleven others of the same size that morning, was the descendant of that most noble gentleman, Kublai Khan, the friend of the Poli. I wish Marco Polo could have seen him.

who would listen to him, that they were all in a fair way for eternal destruction, particularly Eddy, who had fallen asleep in church, dropped his sword with a rattle, and, on awakening, had exclaimed in a loud voice, "Right half-face. March!"

Not a soul minded the good Major, his denunciations were too general, and every one saw that he was doing good, and raising the tone of all. The native Hindoos had heard what he had said about *caste*.

"Caste! Who wants to meddle with their caste? I want them to read this book; there is no loss of caste in *that*. Let any touch *my* caste. Let any man try to take this Bible, God's own book, from *me*. But let him make his peace with his Maker first, or his wife will be a widow."

So spoke our stout old Major, and all went pleasantly, for Meerut was not as yet, nor had Allan come to the confusion of counsel.

But there was a great change now in the pleasant little garrison. Lord Canning sent orders for the whole of the 201st to be withdrawn from Belpore except one company, and for the whole of the cavalry to be withdrawn except one troop. On which Colonel Cordery, Brigadier Sahib, and the Major had a consultation.

The Brigadier was not by any means what Colonel Cordery considered a wise man; but he found himself surprised on this occasion, as most men do, who fancy that silent men are necessarily fools.

"We are to leave a company and a troop," said the Colonel. "Which shall we leave? there is no roster. You can do exactly as you like, you know."

"Lord bless you," said the Brigadier, "as if there was any hesitation. Leave the young uns."

"Which young ones?" asked the Colonel.

"Why *the* three. Leave Roland Evans, for that fellow has a prime minister's head on his shoulders. Leave James Mordaunt (they are in the same troop), for he is a tom-cat that fellow; and we shall want tom-cats in what is coming, as you know as well as I, old man. And leave little Evans, for he is a little devil; leave his company."

"You are master here," said Colonel Cordery, "but come, I never gave you credit for such sagacity."

Said the Major suddenly, "A man who has made so many messes of it as Brigadier Hancock is the very man I could trust."

"Now don't begin chaff, you two," said the Brigadier, "I know you can beat me at that; I ain't clever."

"You are *wise*," said the Major.

"Thanks, old Truepenny. But look here. How could we do better than leave these three boys here? They are only lieutenant, cornet, and ensign, but look at them. Could we do better?"

"Certainly not," said the Colonel.

"Look," said the Brigadier, "at what would come in case of a row royal (which is coming). Why the Nawab can't exist without Jim Mordaunt, and Roland Evans and Edward manage Jim Mordaunt, and Jim Mordaunt can manage the Nawab. Bless you, politically speaking, it is the very best thing we could do."

"You know India, old man," said Colonel Cordery.

"Should do," said the Brigadier. "I have wasted the best part of my life here."

"Not wasted," said the Major.

"You mean that I have earned a good pension, and shall be able to live at Cheltenham. That is wasting your life, is it not? But if it is any satisfaction to you, I beg to state that I am *not* going to live at Cheltenham among broken-down collectors. I am going to see my time out here; and Lord help Rajah or Nawab who meddles with me. I would like to

go to England and see cowslips and trout, but I don't see Cheltenham. You mind what I say, and keep those three boys here."

So there were no Europeans left at Belpore, except one company of the 201st, and one troop of the cavalry regiment in which Roland and Jim were. The troops marched off down the river, by the patch of jungle where Jim's Moonshee was murdered; and the company and troop marched with them to that point, and then halted.

"Good bye, you two, Evans and Mordaunt," said the Colonel.

"Good bye for ever," said that dreadful Major.

"Remember your trust," said the Colonel.

"Remember that your cause is the right one, and that God will back you," said that irrepressible Major.

And so they were gone, with the drums, the trumpets, and the colours, and our three fellows were left alone, with 160 men all told, on the dusty road, opposite the place where the Moonshee had been murdered.

Roland, it so happened, in consequence of invalids, young as he was, was actually in command of the cavalry. The infantry had a captain left them; a solemn young man, with a wall-sided head, who had two desires in life, to educate himself decently, and to do his duty. He had left Harrow five years now, but he had got on badly with his education. He was naturally heavy-headed and stupid, and he had consulted in succession Jim (who confessed himself an ass) Roland and Eddy, as to the means by which fellows got to be clever. He used to sit with them and listen to their talk, apparently under the impression that cleverness was catching, like measles. But he found that it was not. His name was Captain Claverhouse, and on the way back to the now lonely station, dominated by the great white palace of the Rajah, he ranged alongside of Roland, and said,

"What a quaint selection the Brigadier and the Colonel have made. I expected they would leave me, for I am notoriously wooden-headed, though a good fighter; but it seems so strange to leave you and your brother, and Jim Mordaunt. You fellows would do better alive than dead, one would fancy."

"Than dead, Claverhouse, I do not understand you," said Roland.

"Do not you know," said Captain Claverhouse, "that we are left behind here to die, do you not know that we were carefully selected as men who could die best, and leave the deepest mark behind us?"

"No! is that the case? Ethel! Ethel!"

"You may well say 'Ethel!' I say Emily."

"Shall we lose India?" asked Roland, suddenly.

"No; but over our graves will rush a wave of re-conquest, nobler in its aim, greater in its results, than the first one. We shall hear their footsteps as they pass over us, and—

'Our hearts would hear them and beat,
Though we lay for a century dead.'

as your brother sung last night. I thought you knew this."

Roland rode silent for a little time, thinking deeply. At the end of that time he bent from his horse, laid his hand on his commanding officer's shoulder, and said—

"My friend! the thing you speak of *shall not be.*"

"Who will prevent it?" said Captain Claverhouse, sadly. "Evans, I have so much to live for that I am loth to die. If you knew Emily, you would understand me. I could die, or you could die, but to leave Emily all alone—her aunt is not kind to her, sir, she wanted her to marry another man instead of me. But she will marry no one but myself. And to leave her all alone!—Evans, God

has given you brains, can you help me with them."

"I will do my best, Claverhouse. See you here, we must concentrate in the Nawab's palace, that is certain."

"Can we trust the Nawab?"

"Can I trust my brother, Eddy?" said Roland. "The Nawab is one of us. I would go to the deuce for the Nawab now. I know him. What a pity it is that Jim's Moonshee was murdered, he would have been worth £100,000. I say, Claverhouse, all orders must come from you."

"Yes, but give me the office."

"Give the order for infantry to follow cavalry, and see where I will lead you."

"Where?"

"Through the native lines," said Roland. "What are the odds against us?"

"Two thousand to one hundred, as far as I can make out," said Captain Claverhouse. "Better not, had you?"

"Cornet Mordaunt!" shouted Roland, and up came our old Jim, jingle-jangle, who saluted.

"I say Jimmet, old boy—hang it! I beg your pardon, Cornet Mordaunt, we are going to march through the native lines."

"All right, Roley Poley—I beg your pardon, Lieutenant Evans," replied Jim.

"I wish, sir, that you would be more respectful."

"That is the great fault in my character, you know," said Jim.

"But, Jim, I am going to take the men through the lines; and if you see any signs of insubordination, report it to me."

And so they marched. The native lines seemed quiet. These petted subsidiaries were at their usual avocations, lying in the shade and watching their wives cook their dinners. Our little band passed through them with a dead silence on the part of the Sepoys, till they were nearly at the end of the lines. At that point Sepoy ferocity expressed itself, as did likewise old Shrewsbury training.

A young man, dressed only in dhoties, got himself incensed by the appearance of Jim (who really *had* an exasperating look); he rose from his dinner and confronted Jim.

"Puckah, Budah, Pudwallah," said that misguided young man to Jim, of all people. Jim, in spite of his old Moonshee's lessons, was bad at Hindustani, but he understood *that*. He put spurs to his horse, and drawing his sabre, chased that young Sepoy into the desert, hunting him and turning him as a greyhound does a hare, and spanking him with the flat of his sword. The other Sepoys looked on, and made the nearest approach to laughing which they ever do. And if it had not been for Allan Evans, it is extremely possible that Belpore would not have seen what Belpore did see.

"I say," said Jim, riding up and ramming his sword home, "I am not much of a politician myself, having had my brains addled at an early age by strong alternate doses of cricket, football, and Buttmann's Greek Grammar, but I should like to know which party is going to begin."

"What do you mean?" said Roland.

"I mean which side is going to have the drop kick. We are in for a scrimmage, let us have it over. There lies the ball."

"We may avoid the scrimmage after all," said Captain Claverhouse.

"The Nawab does not think so," said Jim, "the odds are long against us, 2,000 to 100 all told. We are now utterly isolated from Europe, selected to die. Why should not we kick the ball? We can die game, of course. For me I have nothing left to live for. A man, I take it, only lives for a woman, and some one else has married the woman I wanted. Die game—yes, rats can do that. Give

us the word, Claverhouse, or Roland, and we will kick the ball so far towards their goal that our game will never be lost."

"What do you propose?" said Claverhouse.

"Going now, one hundred and sixty strong, to the Rajah's palace, cutting his d——d throat, and burning his palace down. You will have to do it sooner or later, why not now?"

"We have no authority."

"*Make* it. India was not conquered by authority, was it? and won't be saved by it. Clive is dead, it seems."

"By his own hand," said Roland.

"There you go, with your Frenchism," said Jim. "But epigram is not argument, old man," and Jim rather sulkily dropped back to the rear.

"That young'un seems to me to have brains," said Claverhouse.

"He is not clever," said Roland, "but he is thoroughly honest. His advice is sensible enough, but you see that we could not act on it. We should not be backed up. I suppose that we had better send our magnificent army to their quarters, and go about among our people to warn them—that will be the best thing, will it not?"

"If you think so."

Roland, from this moment, naturally took the command. How fit for it he was, we shall see soon. Good Claverhouse always spoke of him as his brains. Action was not yet in activity, but it was beginning. Through everything which came, Captain Claverhouse, who gave the orders, was followed by Roland like a shadow; the defence of Belpore was Roland's.

This was the first night on which they had realized their danger and isolation. The first thing which Roland did, when the troops were dispersed, was to send Jim, with a particular letter to the Nawab, begging him to come to him at once.

Jim was as free at the Nawab's palace as any Pariah, a section of the Indian population very dear to this radical Nawab. "For God," he said to Jim, "exalts some, like the Rajah of Bethoor, and keeps down others. But not for their sins, friend. For my part I look with respect on a man whom the good God has taken the trouble to smite." Jim ran in through court after court, and found the Nawab making a kite very diligently.

"I am making a fine kite," said the Nawab. "Come and help me. It is a Franklin kite with a wire in the string. And, oh my dear, we shall fly it in the next thunderstorm, and we shall have the lightning in our own hands. And we shall have shocks, so that our elbows shall go together, or we shall be kill, like Oersted, but we shall have games and fun."

"Come down to European headquarters, old boy," said Jim, "and never mind your kite."

"Oh, never mind his kite, his Franklin kite, his electrical kite. Jim my dear, let us go, we two, and fly it; and hang the string to the Rajah's palace, and make lightning dawk into that hell, and blast it off the face of the earth."

"What! you are savage too, are you, boy?" said Jim. "So am I. But I *want* you. Will you come with me?"

The Nawab rose at once and said. "Do you think that I would not go to the devil with you. Shall we fly our kite together? Oh yes. Shall we bring lightning dawk into Gomorrah. Oh sir! where is my jockey?"

Little Wilson soon appeared. "If you will have the goodness," said the Nawab, "to order my stud-groom, to order my pad-groom, to order my head syce to say to some of my people in general, that if my cob is not round in ten minutes I will at once have the whole of them broiled with cayenne pepper on a slow fire, I should feel obliged to you," and so the little fellow departed to do his errand.

The Nawab's "cob," which he prided himself on, as being an episcopal and entirely orthodox cob, was a blaze-faced chestnut of fifteen hands, from Australia, by Romeo out of Wimmera (she by Macknight's Premier out of Mitchel's Avoca). He showed his breeding in the most unmistakeable way. He was by no means light in his heels like his mother, but he had to a slight extent learnt the art of bucking. The Nawab's syces were not in the least degree afraid of getting behind him, though not one of them dare get on his back.

In about three quarters of an hour, the Nawab appeared, dressed on this occasion in the dress of his Mahratta forefathers, with a spear in his hand; and an uncommonly fine gentleman he looked too, all in white, bare-legged from the knee, with a white turban and plume. He looked paler and more serious than he looked three quarters of an hour before, altogether a different man; he caught the reins from little Wilson and vaulted into the saddle, disdaining the stirrups, but sitting back and letting his legs hang.

The Romeo colt began bucking at once, and the Nawab sat back in his saddle until it really looked as if he would be thrown. But Jim and little Wilson saw him shortening the boar-spear in his hand, and after the horse had bucked about three times, the battle between man and beast began.

The Nawab, sitting easily with dangling stirrups, with the shortened end of his boar-spear began beating the horse over the head and ears; not one blow or two, but an immense number, given right and left with the rapidity of lightning. The unhappy horse, stunned and dazed with the blows, kept under his rider with a terrible bit, succumbed very soon, bent his knees and lay on his side, the Nawab alighting on his feet.

Little Wilson was going to the Nawab's assistance, but Jim said, "Leave him alone, you fool, unless you want to be raddled about the ears with the butt-end of a boar-spear. This is *good*. I have got his monkey up."

"By golly, you have," said the Newmarket man.

The Nawab kicked the horse up and vaulted on his back again, taking three or four turns round the square of the palace, with the boar-spear down between the Australian horse's ears. The fight was over, the man had won; then he rode up to Jim, put his feet in the stirrups, and said, "Now I am ready."

He was perfectly cool and calm, but very pale. Jim said, laughing, "I did not think that Master Slender had been a man of this mettle."

"Did you not?" said the Nawab. "I suppose you never heard of the Mahratta cavalry."

Jim was obliged to confess that he had.

"Gar! I am a Mahratta, and so is that dog-devil the Rajah. I am devilish. Made lazy, idle, useless, by your British rule, in which you have only employed our lower classes in your wars, I had got sleepy. What was it you told me about those men from the land of ice, who stripped themselves naked, and smote and slew?"

"The Berserkers."

"I am a Berserker, I am a Mahratta Berserker. I will come and do all that you wish me. But let me ride and cool myself."

Jim assented.

"We are alone and unarmed. What say you to riding quietly through the native lines, and then up to the Rajah's palace, insulting him, and then going down to Queen's headquarters to make arrangement."

Jim was perfectly agreeable. "*It will do all the good in the world,*" he said. And so it did.

Jim and the Nawab set off at full

speed and were soon in the native lines; the Nawab only with his boar-spear, Jim only with a sword. When they reached the lines Jim found his sword troublesome, it seemed, for he called up a grass-cutter, and unhooking it from the scabbard, gave it to the man to carry up to his quarters, wrangling with the man whether he should give him two pice or three. He called up some of the sulking Sepoys about, and bade them say what was fair for carrying an officer's sword up to the Queen's head-quarters. They decided three pice. So Jim, with the vexed air of a man who has had a verdict given against him, gave the grass-cutter two rupees, a thing not unnoticed by the Sepoys. After this the Nawab and Jim traversed the lines in the most careless manner, leading their horses, perfectly unarmed.

At one point a little brown child, perfectly naked, was lying in front of a hut, with its stomach in the sand right in front of Jim's horse. Jim took it up, kissed it, and set it on his saddle: the child laughed and crowed, and Jim laughed again, for he was very fond of children. But the child's father, a Havildar Mussulman, came swiftly from his hut and tore the child away; while an ominous growl arose from both the Brahmin and Mussulman Sepoys around.

"You must be out of your mind," said the Nawab.

"What have I done?" said Jim. "I only wanted to be kind to the poor little beggar."

"You have done a thing which you had better have cut your throat than do," replied the Nawab. "You have put that child on a pig-skin saddle, and insulted every Mussulman in the lines, that is all."

"Have I made the child lose caste?"

"Caste! He has nothing to do with caste; you have merely insulted the Mussulmans." *

"I am a clumsy beggar," said Jim, "but I did not mean any harm. Now for the Rajah."

They rode swiftly into the Rajah's court-yard—very swiftly indeed, and dismounted, watering their thirsty horses at one of his fountains, then they came slowly out again, leading their horses by the bridle, talking in English, and laughing very loudly. Of all the means which they could have conceived for insulting the Rajah, this was the most contemptuous. After having done this, they rode down to the head-quarters of the Queen's troops, and joined in a council of war which was going on there.

* A regiment of the native infantry of Bengal, previous to the mutiny, might, I believe, be analyzed pretty correctly as follows. It is the roll of the 34th. I beg my readers' pardon for boring them with details in a novel.

Brahmins, who will not work in any way for fear of losing caste	335
Chettyars and Rajpoots, Brahmins who have laid down their caste for a time	237
Lower-class Hindoos	231
Christians	12
Mussulmans	200
Sikhs	74
Total	1,089

Your high-class Brahmin appears, from collected and collated evidence, to be on the whole the most intolerable and unmanageable prig which this groaning earth has ever produced. One of the jolly old Jesuit or Capuchin missionaries represents a profligate laxity of religious opinion when compared to *him*. However, he wanted what he has got, and he has got what he wanted. Chettyars and Rajpoots represent in the Hindoo faith the Christians who sat in the *Galilæ* of the Cathedral. Lower-class Hindoos are what in my sciolism I call tag-rag and bobbery. Christians, I believe mostly Lutheran (12 among 1,089 to confess Christ—long odds, if you look at it, gentlemen). Mussulmans—an ill lot of Mussulmans, and who never would have been Mussulmans at all, but Christians, had various Popes sent any one but idiotic friars to Ajuk and Kublai Khun. Sikhs. Your Sikh is a sad fellow. The rascal will actually eat pork and drink rum. But he can fight. Let the dim, confused fury of the great day of Sobraon speak for that, even if John Lawrence, saviour of India, is silent.

There was, in addition to the military, the judge, the magistrate, the collector, the doctor, the joint magistrate, the parson. The parson was speaking as they came in.

"What I have always tried to avoid," said the Padre, "is insulting them on the score of caste. It is perfectly untrue to say that I have ever done so."

"No one ever said you had," said the judge, laughing. "*You* have been easy enough with them. The question is this. Which is the safest place for us in case of a row (which is coming). Hah! here comes the Nawab and Cornet Mordaunt. Gentlemen, there is thunder in the air, and we wish to put up a lightning conductor; where have you been?"

"Cornet Mordaunt," replied the Nawab, "has been amusing himself by insulting the Mussulmans. I, on my part, have amused myself by insulting the Rajah."

"Reckless! Reckless!" said the Doctor.

"You think so do you?" said the Nawab, carelessly lolling into an empty chair. "I can't say I agree with you. We are ready, and they are not. Cornet Mordaunt here has done a silly thing in placing a naked Mussulman child on a pig-skin saddle, but that only affects the Mussulmans. I called him a fool for doing it at the time, but I have thought over it since, and I am not sure that he has not been rather lucky."

Roland asked why.

"Because, Lieutenant, he has made a very distinct quarrel with the Mussulmans in *my* presence. He has spread dissension among their ranks. The Mussulmans will be at present for cutting his throat and mine. Now, on the other hand, I am a most excellent Brahmin, well known and well liked, and the Brahmins will not have my throat cut unless they can help it. I tell you, gentlemen, that if we can keep, even at this time, from insulting the castes of the Brahmins we may get through. It all depends on that."

"The quarrel," he continued, "between myself and the Rajah is nothing at all. We always squabbled from the time we were boys. I have always insulted him, because it is my habit to insult those I hate. He is an ill-born, ill-bred, ill-educated, ill-living, ill-looking, ill-speaking, ill-thinking son of a female Pariah dog. But it makes nothing our quarrels. Mordaunt has saved his life from my knife once, and if the dog felt gratitude, he would feel it for that. But he knows nothing but evil, and he will to us if he has a chance. For the men in these regiments as many would be for me as for him, providing their caste is not insulted. I have never broken my caste, and they know it, and can trust me. Bah! the dog would cut pork to-morrow, if he liked it."

"I had cold pork for tiffin, Nawab," said the Doctor.

"What a nasty beast you must be," said the Nawab, with perfect good-humour. "Bah! and in this climate, too. You will want something stronger than taraxacum for your own liver, if you don't mind. You have tinkered up so many livers, that I dare say you understand me."

"We shall want 'Dent de lion' here soon," remarked Eddy.

"I wouldn't waste my time in making silly puns, if I was in your place," said Jim. "You may think it fine, but we don't. No one laughed."

"Now, gentlemen," said the Nawab, "I think we may assume this: that these men will not rise, or will, at the worst, rise some for me and some for the Rajah, if their caste is let alone. Padre Sahib, who is of high caste, has told me that his brother Padres have been found willing to be burnt alive sooner than lose caste. The place, I think, he mentioned, was Smithfield poor."

Assent from the Padre. The Na-

wab had now gathered his legs under him in his chair, and had broken his boar-spear, first into two, then into four lengths, across his knee. But he was quite quiet.

"Then it all comes to the same thing, gentlemen. It all comes inexorably, and quite eternally, and never ending fortuitously, to the same, exactly devilish thing: all fiends in the seventh depth of Hell, gnawing at his bones with red-hot iron teeth. It all comes to this, gentlemen. We shall pull through if we keep these men's caste respected. That last wife of mine—my only wife now, Padre—I got her, and saved her from him; and he hates me for it. And curse him, by all gods ever invented, let him come after her. Let him come after her, with ten thousand flaming devils. Let him bring the Sheitan himself. Let him —— I want his heart's blood, and I will have it," and he leaped on his legs, and rammed the head of his boar-spear deep into the table.

"I say, draw it mild, old chap," said Jim, quietly. "You are cutting it a deal too fat, you know."

"I ask pardon," said the Nawab. "I forgot myself."

"You did, *rather*," said Jim. "Cutting a man's throat is one thing, but catterwauling about it beforehand is another. I am ashamed of you. Look at the pains I have taken with your education, and see my return."

"I beg a hundred pardons; I forgot myself. Jim, my dear soul, pull that boar-spear out of the table."

It is a singular thing, but this lazy Hindoo, in his intense fury, had struck the clumsy spike so deep into the table that no one could move it. The Nawab laughed: "An emblem of my determination. When a child of a year old can pull that spear-head from the table, I will desert you, and those I have got to love among you,—Jim, and one whom he forbids me to name, and Roland, and Ethel, and Miss Eleanor Evans (I wish we had her here), and Squire Mordaunt, and Young Mordaunt, and Eddy, and his Allan Gray. I am sorry that I was devilish, but it is in our blood. You understand me about the caste: it must not be interfered with. Now, again, dear Judge, should you not shift to my quarters?"

"Not at once, surely," said the judge. "Let us keep the white feather in our pockets."

"Yes, you are right," said the Nawab, "but let it be understood that if these fellows go mad, your home is there."

"That was well said," said Captain Claverhouse.

"I love the English rule," said the Nawab. "It has debarred me from military exercise, which was perhaps wise, because I might have been an infernal devil, like——"

"Leave it alone, old man—stow it," said Jim.

"But I can strike a blow. I am a Mahratta, and I will strike it for you. Bless your hearts, all of you, we shall be perfectly safe there for six months. These fellows have no leaders. Where is John Lawrence?"

"In the Punjaub," said Roland.

"I know *that*—but where?"

Roland did not know.

"It does not matter much. We can hold out in case of the worst. The Chupatties are round, but I can make a stale mate of it with the Rajah, if you don't make the men jealous. On our next meeting we will decide about the retreat to my palace in case of a crash. Roland Evans, Edward Evans, and James Mordaunt, would you come home with me?"

CHAPTER XLIX.

ROLAND, Jim, and Eddy went home with the Nawab, and he told them why he wanted them. "I made a fool of myself to-day," he said, "and

I wanted you to see why. I want you to see my wife."

It was such a strangely difficult subject that Roland himself would not tackle it. Eddy did. "I thought you had many wives, sir—as many as the Jewish patriarchs?"

"I have but one now, sir," said the Nawab.

"I should think you must be glad of that," said Eddy. "If I was going to marry anybody I should die of fright the day before the ceremony. One would be enough to frighten me to death. Solomon apparently retained his intellect to the last with over six hundred."

"Lor," said Jim, "if I was ever to marry anybody, I would have it all my own way for six months, about which time she would get the upper hand."

So they laughed off a very delicate subject, and went along to the heavy gate of the Nawab's palace, which was slowly swung open to admit them. Roland now, for the first time, saw the Nawab's plan of fortification. There was no show of guns from the outside walls; they could easily have been battered into ruin by artillery, though that would have taken an immense time. But the inside wall, built recently, was fit to defy almost any artillery likely to be brought against it. It was a zigzag wall, of very heavy construction, mounted in casemates, or the best imitation of them that Jim, the Nawab, and a tipsy discharged artilleryman could make. The plan of these two bright young men was this, to put the outer wall, built by the Nawab's father in the good old times, between themselves and the new wall, and to arm that so well that, even supposing it half-destroyed, human existence would become impossible between the two walls, and an assault would be impossible. The palace itself, and the grounds around it, were on an impregnable cliff, on three sides, and the Nawab pointed out with great glee that he commanded from his highest point the palace of the Rajah. "Let him misbehave, my dears, and we will have his pretty house about his ears in a very short time."

"I see no protection from vertical fire," said Roland at once.

"Even if they try it," said the Nawab, dismounting, "we have casemates. Please come with me, and, in the name of British rule, never say what you have seen this day."

He led Roland through many courts, which got more and more solitary as they went on. Then he unlocked a door in a high, white wall, with a key; he locked it after him, and began descending many steps into what had once been a garden, but which was now tangled and wild, and seemed to have been so for many years. At the end of this way a sculptured rock, into which went a deep, black archway, sculptured with the images of devils, as it seemed to Roland—of gods, as it seemed to the Nawab.

They passed into the silence and gloom, monstrous figures loomed all around them, and the light was dim. "Take my hand," said the Nawab; and Roland took it, and spoke in a whisper.

"I never heard of these caves."

"Of course you did not," said the Nawab; "I should be very much surprised if you had. My people are not talkative. These are the temples of Belpore, the existence of which the Judge stoutly denied in a learned antiquarian pamphlet, when Haussmann, the German archæologist, asserted their existence, and got leave from Government to examine them. Haussmann may rummage in Indian manuscripts, and may find out their existence; but there is nothing to prevent my entirely denying their existence. Haussmann may come to me and say, 'Show me the temples of Belpore, Herr Nawab;' and there is nothing to prevent my saying, 'Herr Hauss-

mann, I see what you have been reading. You have been reading the words of Naraballah. What does that word mean in Hindustani, Herr Antiquarian?

"'Well, it certainly does not mean anything at all,' says the German.

"'Why,' I say, 'you with your learning,—you to be so grossly deceived by a book like that! The names mean nothing, the book means nothing but "Gulliver's Voyages." My father pulled down the temples.' And I got Haussmann up an old Moonshee, and the Moonshee confirmed me, for my father has pulled down one pagoda which his uncle built out of spite.

"That Moonshee was put up to lie, but he lie too well. Haussmann says, 'What was the date of the pagoda pulled down by the late Nawab?' and he reply, '25 years; I saw him build.' 'But how old are you?' says Haussmann. '400 years,' says the Moonshee. And the lie counteracted the truth, and I got the Judge to put down the impudent German in a conclusive pamphlet, where he proved they were not temples at all; and here we are in them, you and I.".

"But does the Rajah know of them?"

"Not he. What does he know but devilry? There are but three or four who do know. The secret has been an heirloom with us. Our old enemies found out that this was an ugly place to attack. The power which these caves give me is enormous. You have doubtless seen Pelissier, Marshal of France?"

Roland said, laughing, that he had heard of him.

"Did he find that caves and Arabs would be too much for him? Did he build them up with the Arabs inside? Was he a good general? Hah! We know the value of well-provisioned caves; we will call them, in future, casemates. Will you see them for curiosity?"

They were curious enough, without doubt; but Roland cared little about them. The Nawab led him on through arcade after arcade, until a glimmer of light was before them.

It was a little slit in the limestone rock, covered on the outside with creeping shrubs. Peeping out he saw the whole town of Belpore laid out below him, and the native lines about four hundred yards away at their feet.

He did what he very seldom did; he uttered a loud oath. "Why," Roland said, "you might make the lines and the town impossible of occupation here by one solitary gun."

The Nawab was amused immensely. "Were my forefathers fools," he said, "or did they build Attock? Did they give you trouble in your conquest of India? I think they gave you some. Your life is utterly in my hands at this moment, Roland Evans. Here is a loaded revolver, and I could shoot you down like a dog. I could leave your body here, and by a word have your brother and your friend murdered, and the whole game begun with an immense chance of success. I could outbid the Rajah, or make friends with him, leaving the responsibility on *him*, and securing myself a freedom in case of failure. Why do I not do it?"

"Ah, why?" said Roland; "your reason?"

"Because I am with you—because I am with you, body and soul. Why did you and the Colonel speak of me as you did when your brother began to make friends with me? Treat us like gentlemen; we are, in our way, as fine gentlemen as you are."

"Well, there has been a great mistake about that," said Roland; "but at the present moment I beg to remark that Dean and Adams' revolvers, used theatrically for oratorical purposes, are uncommonly likely to go off; so if you will be kind enough to hand me that one, I shall be much obliged."

The Nawab laughed again, and by passage after passage they came to the upper air, in another little garden, an alum-bagh, and the Nawab, turning to Roland, said, "What do you think of me now?" meaning with regard to his defences.

Roland understood him to mean, what did he think of him personally, and he answered, "I think you a very good fellow, but weak in your intellect."

"That certainly," said the Nawab, with ready good-nature. "If we had not been weak in our intellects, you never would have had India. We fight as well as you do, or nearly as well; but we have no brains. Yet you are our lords and masters. And to tell you the truth, I wish you to continue so. Now come on and see my wife."

"Is she Hindoo?" asked Roland.

"No, she is French—Christian—Papist, I think you call her sect. From Algeria. She has been trying to point out to me the differences between your sect of Christianity and hers. But being, as you just said, as one deprived of understanding, I have not made it out at all. If we both live to the age of Fatoor (who, you will remember, was the Fakir of Dinosapore, and who lived to the age of 840 years, and is, consequently, confounded with the Jew's Methuselah) she may possibly make me understand the differences between the Christian sects; for the present I am in the dark. I sit and make electrical kites while she explains."

"You are a quaint fellow, Nawab," said Roland, laughing.

"Not so quaint as you, though," said the Nawab. "You are what my wife would call 'Devil's-own-quaint.' You English, she says, are all mad, and there is no doubt about it."

"Why are we mad?"

"Why are you here? Could you you not let us go to the devil our own way. What brought you here? You are all mad, and I am the maddest of all madmen because I love you. Depart, you English, and leave me and the Rajah to settle scores. I will found a dynasty which shall last my lifetime, and I will build a city and a tower whose top shall reach to heaven." And then he made a low and vulgar remark about a great Potentate, which any gentleman would die sooner than repeat.

"Never mind *him*, or the Tower of Babel, or the confusion of tongues. You leave French politics alone. The French Emperor will not trouble *you*. If he discounts his bills at a high premium and leaves his son to pay the principal, it is no business of ours. What I want to know is this. Have you lost caste in any way by marrying this French lady?"

"Not a bit," said the Nawab. "Not in the slightest degree. I will tell you the truth. This lady was courted, spoken to, what you call it, by the Rajah, and she hates the Rajah. I, loving European manners, fall in love with her, and propose. She insists at once that all the other ladies be banish. I consent at once. I say to her, Madame, you are worth all the women in the all world. I want a trusted friend, in you I found her and she consents, but the priest of her faith could not marry her to me.

"I represent to him that he should. That Madame (a religious woman) desires it. I tell you, my dear Roland, that he would not have one word to say to us. He says I must be baptize, I dare him to attempt it. I am not Christian, my Roland, though I love Christians. She rebel and I rebel, and she quotes the example of Ajuk Khan married to a Nubian Christian, which marriage was allowed by the Pope's emissaries. Of that of course you know. (Roland did not.) So in the end my wife had in a German Lutheran missionary, 'for he is a Christian,' she said, and we were marry.

And she what you call papist, insisted on what she call the Anglican ritual, for he would not use the papist, and he said in his ritual, 'For richer, for poorer till God does us part.' And I thought that good. And it shall be so between me and my wife. The poor girls are provided for. It is past. It is gone. There is no more of them. I have a wife now. 'For richer for poorer, till death does us part.' You fools, you English, you have abolished the suttee of the wife for the husband, you have only introduced the suttee of the husband for the wife. You have given us a great gift, my friend."

Roland bowed his head. Singularly enough, he of all people broke down and got hysterical. Climate one will suppose. He said, "God knows I am doing suttee now."

"I know," said the Nawab. "But tell us, is it Mary Maynard or Ethel?"

"Why how could you doubt?" said Roland. "How did you know?"

"Never mind," said the Nawab. "Is it Ethel."

"Of course it is," said Roland. "But—"

"Never mind that little word," said the Nawab. "She is Jim Sahib's sister. I said so. See here. My wife reads the Hebrew Scriptures, and she reads of a love surpassing that of woman. That love I have for James Mordaunt. And all this Indian hell shall rise from its depths against us; but if you will be my friend, we will beat it. And you shall have the honour. And you shall go home to Jim's sister, and say, 'Jim is kill, and Eddy is kill, and the poor silly Nawab is kill, but I am come home with my glory to marry Ethel; you shall see all that. But you must be secret. Now we will come and visit my wife."

Mrs. Nawab, as Eddy and Jim persisted in calling her, was a very nice, quiet, clever little Frenchwoman. She declined to sit cross-legged, but sat on a rocking-chair. I beg to remark that I am going back in my narrative, and at the point where we take her up she was merely gossiping with Eddy and Jim Mordaunt, while Roland and the Nawab were in the caverns.

She could talk English, this Mrs. Nawab; talk it a little too plainly, not measuring the value of her words.

"I am glad to receive you two Englishmen. Mr. Evans (to Eddy) you are very ugly, but your face is good. Mr. Mordaunt, you are very handsome, but you look cruel. Did you ever murder any one for example?"

"Heaps and heaps," said Jim, "in imagination."

And so they talked, laughing at the mistakes in one another's language for an hour or two in the cool white piazza, and they had coffee, which Madame herself brewed, and they had pipes, and enjoyed themselves immensely, and were very innocent, amusing, and talkative indeed.

Now, be it remembered, that I am not in any way defending these good people's doings. I am only trying to say how things went. Among his Anglicisms, the Nawab had started a low disreputable long English clay pipe, such as you see laid in heaps on the table in the smoking room of English pot-houses, what we used to call as young men, a long churchwarden. This he had smoked so long that he had coloured the bowl all up one side; and it now occurred to Madame, who was an old Algerian campaigner, that she must put aside her own hookhah, and smoke her husband's pipe.

He objected, but she pleaded for it, and so prettily that they all laughed, and at last he gave way. He filled it for her, and she lit it and smoked, while the others smoked cheroots, and they all sat cross-legged, chatting.

* * * *

Allan Gray, arriving at the Captain's compound and asking for Eddy,

was directed that Sahib Edward Evans was at that same time of speaking in the palace of the Nawab of Belpore. Pursuing him to that abode of heathenesse, and finding his way through nearly innumerable native servants, he discovered his pet sitting cross-legged in a row with a heathen gentleman. Rather objectionable Roland, intensely objectionable Jim, and a French lady, sitting cross-legged on a carpet on the ground, smoking away at a long churchwarden pipe.

He was so unutterably horrified that he was stricken dumb. He could say nothing at all. He was received with a very noisy hail, and every symptom of welcome, as for Eddy, he fairly ran into his arms, and was rather surprised at the coldness of his reception. James and Roland were also most friendly.

As for the Nawab, there was nothing he would not have done for him; but Allan was like a dog at a fair. Being for the first time in his life brought face to face with a real heathen, and finding him a most affectionate gentleman, he was exceedingly gawky and lost. Madame tried a little badinage on him, and would have had him take her pipe; but she only horrified him the more.

He seemed at last to have got into a land utterly forgotten of God, and given over to the devil—a land which seemed to him to have corrupted, lowered, nay, even blackguardized, such very pure and kindly people as Roland and Eddy. It was an intolerable matter.

To find an intolerable thing, with Allan, was the very same thing as setting to work to mend it. The odds were enormous against him. He could not speak the language, but his duty was to him singularly clear. He must preach the Gospel in this land in *any* language. Through want of faith we had lost the gift of tongues, through faith we might regain it. He would preach the pure gospel in English, be the consequences what they may.

Alas, poor lad! There are various ways of doing God's work, and yours was one. Some cursed you for their ruin, and curse you yet. You yourself thought that you had failed. Yet as my brother says,

> "Not all who seem to fail, have failed indeed,
> What though the seed be cast by the wayside,
> And the birds take it.—Yet the birds are fed."

Perhaps there is a Pariah or two at Belpore who remembers the kindly, gentle, young enthusiast. At any rate he brought on the cataclysm, which was well avenged, that any one may preach the Gospel now at Belpore.

CHAPTER L.

THERE was perfect silence still, and the Dawk came most regularly. The Parsees had gone round to every one instantly, after the departure of the European troops, and persuaded them to make their wills, and send them to Europe; and no one laughed at them. A Calcutta paper, however, got hold of the fact, and wrote a screaming leader on it, a real slasher, the sort of thing which would make you split your sides with laughing. Everything was quite quiet; there was no danger at all.

Allan seemed to speak very little to any of his compatriots except Eddy. With the others it was merely good-day, and good-bye. To Eddy, he talked a good deal, and they cross-examined Eddy, but Eddy said that Allan only talked to him about his soul, so they forebore. And in reality Eddy spoke merely the plain truth. Allan merely talked to him about the state of his soul, which he thought immensely unsatisfactory. He was perfectly silent to every one about his

great scheme. He had got a rascally old Brahmin for a Moonshee, and he was learning all about caste. Eddy's soul could wait until he had done his best to blow the British empire to pieces.

Our friends had their little mess still, and talked over their neighbours.

"That is a queer fellow, that half-brother of yours," said the Doctor. "Does he drink?"

"Drink!" said Roland. "He is a teetotaller.

"The pupil of his eye is very much enlarged," said the Doctor. "Did you ever hear of a place called Hanwell?"

Roland had heard of it.

"Ah!" said the Doctor, "it is a nice easy distance from London, and extremely well conducted. Claverhouse, the claret is with you."

"Why did he come here?" asked Claverhouse, pointedly to Eddy.

Eddy blushed scarlet, and said that he did not know. Whereas he knew perfectly well, for Allan had told him that very morning something which gave him the clue to Allan's behaviour. Allan in his self-justifying way, had put all sorts of reasons before Eddy for his extraordinary expedition to India. The state of the Hindoos, the state of Eddy's soul, tanks, railways, everything. But at last had let out the very real truth that he did not care for life without Ethel, and that he had discovered that Ethel did not care for life without Roland.

The little fellow dared not speak. There was danger and wrath abroad, and anything might happen. Roland and Allan were rivals. It was terrible. But a curious thing is that the honest-little lad trusted Allan as well as he did Roland, only he dared not speak.

"I wish," said the Judge, "that he had gone anywhere else. You will forgive me saying, my dear Evans, that the man is a dreadful bore."

"He cannot have bored you much, Judge," said Eddy.

"Child! child!" said the Judge, "he has shortened my very worthless life. What have I done that he should look up all my decisions in important cases, and tell me that I am an unjust judge? I am nothing of the kind. He says to me also, that the conquest of India was the grossest act of piracy ever committed, and that if I loved myself so far as to partake of the spoils, I might at least give just judgments. I always thought I was so very just."

"He has been at me too," said Captain Claverhouse. "He said that we had no right whatever to annex this territory. The only object of war," he argued, "was to spread Christianity. Whereupon I referred him to the history of Japan, where a few ships would have saved the missionaries. He shifted then, for he has no education or little, and said that he meant Protestant Christianity; the Protestants were never aggressive. I mentioned Silesia to him, and with most singular honesty he confessed that he knew nothing of that small piece of annexation. He is a good fellow, but he wants grinding."

"But he is a sort of turnip-ghost at a christening," argued the Doctor. "Why did he come here? He will play the deuce with us before he has done with us. Of all times in all creation, for such a dissociated radical to appear. Never mind, my dears, I have seen death too often to fear him."

"Now look you here, Doctor," said the Captain, "we shall pull through this, only it is a great pity that there is not one with influence over this turnip-ghost missionary of a man to restrain him."

At this moment the Nawab, who was sitting beside Jim at the lower end of the table, broke out into a roar of laughter. Jim had been telling the Nawab, in a stifled whisper,

how they had beaten the London Rowing Club at Shrewsbury regatta; and the joke hit the Nawab. It was impossible, of course, for Captain Claverhouse to be angry with a royal prince who had all their lives in his hand, still he might scold Jim.

"Mr. Mordaunt, I wish you would not make the Nawab laugh just as I was speaking—I really"—but he said no more, for Roland's white hand was laid suddenly on his chest, meaning "silence," and Roland walked softly down the room, and sitting beside the Nawab, put his arm affectionately over his shoulder, in schoolboy fashion.

As for Captain Claverhouse, he was so paralyzed by what he saw at the door immediately behind the Nawab, that I go at once to other authors to say how scared he was. But I have no author who will help me in any way. For extreme fantasticisms the best authorities I know are Rabelais and the late Artemus Ward. But Rabelais can seldom be quoted (having lived before the time when men found out that you could have humour without dirt—that is to say, 300 years before Dickens and Thackeray), and Artemus Ward is at times feeble and inconsecutive. Artemus Ward may talk of sky-blue fits, (which, by the way, is Dickens'), but he could not rise to the level of the American revolution, any more than Dampmartin could rise to the level of the French. Captain Claverhouse, had he found his tongue, would have scolded like Dampmartin. But he was simply stunned and held his peace. While Roland kept his strong arm tightly round the Nawab's neck.

This was the eve of the Indian mutiny. The most reckless, causeless, stupidest revolution ever planned. Like all ill-considered and causeless revolutions, it failed. It was evil against good, and good won. Think sir, what India would be now, had the revolution succeeded. Come, sir, think of that.

In revolutions, I am young, but I have watched many, you raise the devil. For example, June 1848. The devil was raised here at Belpore in 1857. The devil was the Rajah of Bethoor. The man who raised him was the young religionist, Allan Evans.

CHAPTER LI.

For behind the back of the unconscious Nawab, who had Roland's strong arm round his shoulder, stood the Rajah himself, and Allan Gray behind him.

The astonishment of the whole room was expressed by a profound silence. No one was in the least degree up to the occasion, or able in any way to form an idea of what had happened. The Nawab was the last to see him, and only saw him after he heard his voice, and then he rose and confronted him.

The Rajah and the Nawab were both fine and handsome men, though the Rajah was puffy with vice and high feeding; had there been one of those sudden and swift Asiatic encounters, either man might have gone down in an instant. James Mordaunt was standing partly between them, with a view of stopping hostilities, when the Major pulled him by the sleeve, and whispered, "You are hampering your man;" on which Jim removed.

In reality the Major saw most plainly that, in case of a *fracas* between the two Indians, the Rajah would most certainly put his sword through James's body, and apologize for it afterwards. But it was not to the Nawab that the Rajah spoke, he addressed the whole company:—

"Gentlemen, there seems to be some misunderstanding and mistrust about me. I have come quietly, an Indian gentleman among English gentlemen, to give explanations, to remove all doubts and difficulties, and to reassure myself about our friendly relations. This gentleman has consulted much with me, and we have exchanged opinions, and are agreed. Gentlemen, you are in danger here."

"We are perfectly aware of it, Rajah," said Captain Claverhouse. "Who is that behind you? not Mr. Evans, whom God seems to have misguided, but that attendant of yours, who has sat down in that chair by the door. Mordaunt, go and collar that fellow, and kick him out. What the devil does the fellow mean by sitting down in the presence of a British officer without leave? Are you come here to insult us, Rajah?"

Jim proceeded on his errand instantly, but the young man had vanished. The Rajah, turning to see the result, only saw Jim, coolly, with his back against the door, and he turned very pale, but retained his self-possession entirely. His race knows no fear of death. He thought that his time was come, and, beast, liar, treacherous, cruel hound as he was, he knew from the traditions of his forefathers how to die. We, of all people, should allow that to the Brahmins.

He looked quietly at Claverhouse and Roland, and laid his hand quickly upon his sword—a pretty, dangerous, little Liège toy. Roland understood him at once. "You are as safe as if you were in your own zenana, sir. James, come awa from that door."

He knew thaty he was safe now.

"By" (some of his gods), he thought "these fools! If I had one of them up at my palace, he should not get off like this. Let me try them on their own ground."

"You teach us Asiatics a good lesson," he said, boldly. "We are enemies. If at this moment I had one of you in my palace, he should never leave it alive. You are pirates, dacoits, and villains. You had no right in India. Your wrongs and your robberies here would make hell move. Your Hastings was a robber, whom you acquitted; your Clive was a robber, who, utterly unable to bear the burden of his sins, killed himself. I am your bitter enemy, but I am safe, because I am among English gentlemen. I am in your power! will any one raise a hand against me? Not one. *I* know you.

"I have trusted myself among you, because I wished to make friends with you, and to save you. I desire my rights, which are entirely incontestable, no more. I have explained my case to this English gentleman, and he agrees with me."

Eddy ran quickly up to Allan Gray, and caught his hand. "Allan! Allan!" he said, "you have not been listening to this man?"

"You are a fool," said Allan. "He is prepared to hear the truths of Christianity; what is more, allow them to be preached, in a bold and free manner, as they should have been preached before."

The Padre bounced up, and cried out, "Have you been preaching against caste in the native lines, under the protection of this man?"

"I have, sir," said Allan; "and I glory in it."

"Then may the good God forgive you our blood. I am an old man, and it does not matter. But these bonny, innocent boys! Well, well. I strayed here and lost my wife, and I said to myself, 'I will make rupees for the little ones'; but *they* all died; and I said, 'I will stay on here, and do what I can among these heathen, for Christ's sake, that I may meet my wife and my little ones in heaven.' A selfish motive. Has any poor native wanted a rupee while I had one? Am I not poor? Have I not tried to rival the Jews and the Parsees in their charities without their means? Am I not a broken old man? Have not Hemmetz, the Lutheran; Faoli, the Papist; and I, worked together here for years, trying to bring them to the dogmas of Christianity by the example of our lives? Have we not agreed to leave caste alone? and now here is a newcomer, who has brought the house of so many years building about our ears!"

"Don't preach, Padre," said the good Major, quietly. "Mr. Allan Evans, have you any idea of what you have been doing?"

"Yes, sir. I have been carrying Christ's banner into quarters where it should have been carried before."

"You have been carrying the devil's banner, sir. That man has instigated you to do the only one thing you should have left alone. He has fooled you to the top of your bent, sir. He has advised you to do what he wants done. Our blood is on your head. You had better never have been born than have come here."

"What did I tell you?" said the Rajah.

"You were right, sir," said Allan. "We will come away." And they turned away.

"One moment, Allan," cried Eddy. "Do not go with that man. I beg of you, by your old love for me, do not go with that man."

"I came here for love, and I find a brothel. Those I loved and trusted gone from their faith—their purity—their religion. Ministers ashamed of the gospel they vowed to preach; men educated as Roland and you have been sitting with heathens and papist women, with the surroundings of a low English

pot-house. (Alas for Madame Nawab's pipe !) I have done with my countrymen, my relations, and life, I shall die, but I shall die preaching God's own gospel. Good-bye for ever, Eddy."

That leal little fellow, whom Ethel would never appreciate, was not going to let him go like this. He dashed at him, and cried, "Allan, you are utterly deluded," and cast himself between Allan and the door.

Not one of the others moved. Eddy got his back against the door, but Allan scornfully moved towards it, and laid his hand on Eddy's shoulder.

"Allan, by the old Shrewsbury days, by our old Field-Lane days, by every pleasant hour we have ever had together, stay with your countrymen in this dark hour. Let race prevail with you, Allan ; let blood prevail with you. Do not leave your brother *now*. You are misguided ; you are mad. That man is a dog and a villain. Ask Roland——"

Ask Roland ! the favoured lover of Ethel. Oh, Eddy ! what evil spirit caused you to raise the devil into that powerful, up-looking, bloodhound face, and those bloodhound eyes ?

The dykes which Allan had raised round the furious tide of passion which was in him, by religion, by order, by rule, broke down here at once. The man was never a *sound* man. There had always been depths of potential ferocity in him, deeper and fiercer than ever were in Jim Mordaunt ; and he had had wit enough to know it, and like a fine and wise fellow as he was he had kept them in order. But at this moment, at Eddy's unhappy allusion to Roland, added to the excitement of the situation and climate, his habits of life broke down suddenly. He seized Eddy, and with the strength of a lion cast him against the Rajah, uttering a loud and furious curse against Roland.

If Aunt Eleanor could have seen her work now, she would be inclined to drown herself. Her one folly, that of throwing Allan against Ethel to plague him, had caused this. That Allan, at the mere mention of Roland's name, had gone mad, and had cast poor Eddy against the Rajah. "Be sure thy sin will find thee out." Poor lady, she had to dree *her* ward.

Eddy was sent staggering against the Rajah, and the Rajah was sent staggering against the stone door-post, against which he fell, cutting his forehead deeply. The last seen by any European eye, save one, of that Rajah was seen now. A tall, very handsome man, in green velvet and gold, with white trousers. Deadly pale, with the blood dripping over his face, which he wiped with a French cambric pocket-handkerchief, bordered with lace. Before he followed out Allan Gray, he turned to the party, and said, very quietly,—

"I am sorry that this interview, meant so well on my part, should have terminated so abruptly. It was entirely my clumsiness. I hope that Ensign Evans has not been hurt. You know as well as I do that a struggle is coming, and you know on which side I am. My claim to be Jaghire of Bethoor has been refused by your parliament, and I am going to test the power of the British empire. I am the guest of Englishmen, and I am safe. I therefore warn you that the lines will be fired to-morrow night."

So, with the bloody cambric handkerchief in his hand, he bowed himself out into the dark Indian night, never to be seen again by any European eye, save Allan Gray's.*

* I must beg my readers to remember that this is fiction, that is to say, a dramatic accumulation of probabilities. The Rajah of Bethoor is not Nana Sahib, any more than the Nawab is Scindiah. Perhaps there never was such a nice Nawab as my Nawab. Yet Scindiah is wiser than he. The quasi facts about the Rajah, his works and his ways, have been taken, as I acknowledge, from papers of Lieutenant Willoughby—the young man who served God from his youth, and who never was ashamed

Eddy was standing against the door, in blue and gold, and white trousers, with his sword-belt looped up, ready for evening parade. The others had risen, and were looking at the doorway, but they could not see Eddy. The image left on their eye was that of a tall man, in green and gold, who had passed out at the door, waving a bloody cambric handkerchief behind him.

* * * *

Dramatic and fantastic. Well, as I said before, if the Indian Mutiny was not *that*, it was nothing.

CHAPTER LII.

THE Major was gone. "Shut the door, Eddy, and come here," said Roland, sharply. "Claverhouse, here is the devil to pay sooner than I thought. Do you really believe that that rascal has egged my unhappily ignorant brother on to preach against caste?"

"Of *course* he has," said the Padre. "How can you so clever ask such a question?"

"Will they be up to-morrow night, then?" said Roland.

"No, they won't be up to-morrow night," said Captain Claverhouse. "Were you ass enough to believe that that fellow would give us warning? They will be up *to-night*, man. The moon will be up in two hours; they will therefore move in one hour and a half."

"Why not before?" asked Roland.

"Because they will want to distinguish Indians from Europeans; and the lines will not burn brightly for above half an hour."

"What are we to do, sir?" said Roland.

"I will give you my experience now, if you will give me your brains afterwards. Your troopers are in bed by now, for it has been hot. Go down, Mordaunt and you to quarters and awaken them silently in the dark."

"Yes, sir, but the native servants?"

"Ah, that is a bother. Sham drunk and sing a loud song. Make believe that you are drunk, and are going to—(a part of the English establishment in India which I will call 999, Queer-street,) and sing * * *."

"I am afraid we could not do that, sir," said Roland.

"Law, I thought that you University fellows were up to anything," said Captain Claverhouse.

"Jim and I, sir," said Roland, "are two of Doctor K——'s boys, and I don't think we could do that. The Doctor might hear of it. We will sham drunk and be noisy, if you please."

"Well, that will do. Tell the men to be ready to saddle at a moment's notice. Our object is to get the English officers to the Nawab's palace in time. Your duty in future will be to give me your brains, of which I have few. At present it is to protect the Europeans to the Nawab's palace. You and Mordaunt go to the men in their beds, and get them ready. I trust nearly all to you, for cavalry in the dark is what no man dare face."

"What will be the signal, sir?"

"Oh, our bugles. We shall be down amongst you directly. But we must clear the bungalows of the women and children. Your troop must protect our rear. How soon can you get your men in the saddle."

"In three or four minutes, I think," said Roland. "It is a great pity that the command of the troop has fallen on such a subaltern as myself."

"It is a piece of God's good mercy," said Claverhouse, "that Lummers and Rounders fell sick. Why, I would go to the devil after you.

of it, even at Addiscombe. Praying and fighting so uncommonly well together, my friends. There was once a man called Cromwell, as there was also a man called Louis IX.

You come of the breed which conquered India. Now Mordaunt and you go to your sleeping troopers, and wake them in this way. Put your hand on their foreheads, and they will awaken silently. If you shake them by the shoulder, some one of them will cry out. Go off, you two boys, and do as I tell you."

"Where *did* you learn these details?" said Roland.

"In the Khyber Pass."

"But you could not have been in the army then."

"As a drummer I was. Never mind my antecedents. *I* rose from the ranks—this is not a time for long stories. Cut away. At the sound of our fifes and drums look after our rear. Cut away, Mordaunt. God go with you." And so they went to the dark night's work.

"You are quite ready for us, Nawab?" said Claverhouse.

"I have been ready 250,000 years," said the Nawab.

"Then would you mind going home?"

No. It appeared that the Nawab, emphatically declined to do anything of the kind. "He be devil, they all be devil; by devil I shall not go home. I have provide everything, and I have no fight. I want fight, and I shall not go home, by dam."

CHAPTER LIII.

MEASURES well taken, but too late for some. Eddy, Claverhouse, and two other officers were just following Roland out of the door, to get their men hurriedly together, and get the women and children out of the bungalows, when a Company's officer, a young man of great promise—just married—ran into them, and hurriedly asked for a pistol.

"Are they up so soon," said Claverhouse.

"Yes, yes; lend me your revolver."

Claverhouse did so. The young officer put it to his own ear, fired it off, and fell dead across the mess-table.

Eddy drew back shuddering and deadly white, but Claverhouse said loud and firmly to him, "Evans! Steady!" and Eddy was perfectly steady at once.

"Why has he done that?" whispered Eddy, aghast.

"I suspect they have murdered his bride while he was away from her on duty," said Claverhouse. "Blow up bugles! A hundred and sixty Englishmen against all hell!"

The bugles woke the strange, ominous stillness of the night, with the assembly. Roland's trumpet was heard in reply, a sheet of flame shot up from the native lines, and nearly the most ghastly and fearful thing in the history of our empire, was begun.

Roland and Jim had got their men together and mounted, and went at a sling trot down the long dusty road past the piece of jungle where the Moonshee was murdered. The fire before them blazed brighter and brighter, lighting up the road clearly. The moon was down as yet, but there was light enough for them.

Roland was particularly anxious not to get this jungle in his rear without support. He halted there for one instant, and but for one, for he heard Claverhouse's jolly roar behind him, "Go on, Evans, we are here."

They slung on again, it was light enough now, but they went cautiously. The first person they met was an English lady, hurrying on a child by the hand, and carrying another. She stopped for a moment and explained hurriedly to Roland that the child she carried was dead, but that the Sikhs had saved the one she was leading, and that the Sikhs were close behind her. She was barefooted, simply clothed in a long white night-dress, spotted with the blood of the dead

child, and she had thrown round her neck, in her unutterable confusion and horror, the strap of an old Scotch fishing creel, which bumped against her shoulders as she ran barefooted along the sandy road.

Next they met three young officers' wives, coming as fast as they could, two were leading a third along. One of the leaders was Peggy O'Dowd, the other Mrs. Kirk. The young woman they led was the bride of the man who had shot himself on the mess-table. And she was laughing, and singing her part in Acis and Galatea, which she had learnt two years before in the Philharmonic Society at Dublin.

Then they met a little child in its bedgown, all alone. And it said that the men had beaten its ayah, but that the Havildar Ben Allar had sent it down the road to ask its way to the house of the Nawab. He told Roland also, that he had lost his puppy, and would doubtless have entered into other details, but Roland had the opportunity of giving him into the hands of two Native women flying along the road, who brought him to the Nawab's.

You may thus, if you are a man with the ordinary feelings of an Englishman, guess what was the temper of Roland as he approached the lines of these pampered mercenaries. But before he got dangerously near them, he found a little army approaching him, and he halted and challenged.

A cheery English voice cried out "Don't charge, Evans, if that is you, we are the Sikhs, Christians, Eurasians and Europeans. We have all the women and children which we can get."

It was a captain of a Native regiment who spoke.

"My dear soul," said Roland, "we left you there too long."

"Well," said Captain Morton, "we could not have come away before," which may sound prosaic, but which was perfectly true.

"Are there any left we can rescue," asked Roland.

"I think not," said the E. I. C. S. Captain. "We were not prepared for this business to-night; we were very carefully put off our guard. All we can save I believe we have got here. Can we pass them on to your infantry?"

"We can escort them back," said Roland. "I suppose that it is no use going on."

"Well," said Morton, "it is no *use* certainly, our officers are all killed. But yet, but still—"

"I do not understand you," said Roland.

"Well, we shall all be dead soon, and a week or two sooner or later does not much matter. Could not you detach a king's officer to convoy these people to the rear, to your headquarters, or even to the infantry, which you say is in your rear. I have ten mounted Sikhs who will follow me to the devil, and that, with your men, will make up eighty. We *may* die now; on the other hand, we may not. But it seems to me that we cavalry shall be of small use in the defence of the Nawab's palace. Is not now the time to sacrifice ourselves?"

"Would you explain further," said Roland.

"Certainly," said Morton. "I have been long in India, and I think this is the beginning of a great crisis. Now is the time for a lesson to them. The odds against us are not great. We are 80 men to their 2,000. Come, sir, I tell you plainly, it rests in your hands to assist in the saving of India, or to assist in sending back her history for a hundred years."

"I quite think so," said Roland, quietly. "But I wish to know our chances of administering chastisement."

"Bring your troop and the Sikhs

round this bit of jungle in the darkness, fall on them, and then ride home."

"But," said Roland, "I am bound to take care of these poor lads who follow me. We must pass this piece of jungle again, and we can be cut to pieces by a flank fire of musketry. Any officer could point *that* out."

"Yes, but," said Morton, "can't you see that the Sepoys have cut all their officers' throats, and that they have not *got* any officers. It is to my mind extremely possible that we shall live through it. And just think of the lesson."

"You speak wisely," said Roland. "I will do it. You can depend on your Sikhs?"

"They have eaten our salt," said Morton, proudly. "Remember Chillianwallah."

Yes, it was all well enough, Ethel would love him better than ever now. She would tear her hair a little perhaps, and she would be cross to Aunt Eleanor, and time would go on, but she would know that he loved her, and that he died worthy of her. Morton was right. This was the begining, and a lesson was wanted. One thing he could do. He could save her brother. All hopes of getting alive out of the hell before him were dead. Yet Jim might be saved.

"Cornet Mordaunt."

Jim came up and saluted.

"Cornet Mordaunt, the troop is about to advance rapidly to the front, into the Native lines. You are ordered to escort the stragglers back to the rear of the infantry, and put yourself under the orders of the Captain commanding."

To which, Jim, God bless him, poor fellow, said "I will see you —— first."

"This is flat insubordination, sir, in the face of a mutiny about to grow to a revolution."

"Never mind those long words," said Jim. "Come, Roley, don't be a fool. Think of the old four-oar, the Unconquerables. What would the Doctor say, what would Aunt Eleanor say, if after so long I left you now? Roley, don't be a fool. Do you mean to say that you propose to send back to Ethel a disgraced and dishonoured brother? Why, my good Roley, I would sooner hang myself than face Ethel, Meredith and my brother, if I went back. Come, sharp is the word, old fellow. They will see us directly. Cut away."

Roland gave the word of command, and they rode away round the jungle in fours. Roland and Morton heading the troop, and Jim riding on the flank, between the junction of our own men and the Sikhs. They went off at a sling trot, and they never altered their pace till the end.

What those unutterable devils, our pampered mercenaries, had been doing that night under the advice and guidance of the Rajah, is not to be told here. Causeless, aimless, brutish, shameless. They thought they had won. The bungalows were sacked, the fire of the lines was dying out, the late waning moon was rising over the tope as if to see the end of it all: when in the ears of the brutalized and drunken revellers, there arose the sound of the clanking of British cavalry.

In the midst of the sin and the smoke and the din, came Roland, riding calmly, with sixty young Englishmen behind him, and twenty good Sikhs behind them.

Roland gauged the power of the Indian mutiny from this moment. He saw they had no leader. He had conceived that it was death to come here. So it would have been, had there been one solitary Orsini among them. In the midst of all their amorphous fury and wickedness, the sight of the old scarlet, gold, and red, was enough to paralyze them. A more desperate deed of valour than Roland's was seldom done. He had

eighty men, and he rode deliberately into the midst of two thousand infuriated mercenary mutineers, and not one man of them dared show his musket.

"Don't stop," said Morton, eagerly. "We shall get out of this without bloodshed. Who would have thought it!"

"I think I will stop once," said Roland. "The fellows should not miss their lesson."

"I beg you not, Evans. I beg and pray you not. I urged you to come here to-night because I thought that the end would be death. I never dreamt, with all my experience, that the day would be so demoralized. Man, man, at this very moment you are half way between heaven and hell. Heaven! look at that. I thought they would not let us go. Charge at the gallop, man!"

"We shall do it very well at the trot," said Roland. "It is only a rallying square, and the men are not loaded—they are only loading now."*

They trotted steadily up to the square, and as Roland said, the men were not loaded. But these few fought and fought well, but were ridden down. Morton's horse was killed under him by a bayonet thrust, but Morton himself was uninjured, and hung on to Roland's right stirrup while Roland cut at the bayonets with his sword. The few men who had formed the rallying square had done their work however, and dispersed.

The troop were trotting, and the men were thrown into confusion by this very slight opposition. The Sikhs got mixed with the Europeans, and though perfectly brave, were very glad to get out of a dangerous embroglio.

* The unutterable imbecility of the *beginning* of the Indian mutiny is almost incredible. The defence of Delhi had elements of splendour about it. The Indians have a curious word for international law—the word is "Dacoitee." A friend of mine (in the Hanwell Asylum, but very clever) translates the word as "The Devil take the hindmost."

"Well," said Roland, when they were opposite the patch of jungle where Jim's Moonshee was killed. "Who ever would have believed that? I never thought to have got out of that alive. I say, Jim. Where is Jim Mordaunt? Jim! Jim!"

He might have Jim-Jimmed till he was hoarse. The troop were all right, the Sikhs were all right; but there was no Jim.

And between Roland and Jim had arisen suddenly a barricade of half-burned rafters, with two thousand men behind it, impossible for cavalry. And the Rajah, in green, gold, and white, stood at the top of it for a moment, and saluted Roland courteously.

But Roland Evans was on one side of the barricade and Ethel's brother Jim was on the other.

CHAPTER LIV.

"WELL done, Evans!" cried Claverhouse, running up. "Splendidly done, sir. The very thing to have done under any circumstances. You are a hero!"

"The idea was not mine, and it has been carried out so ill that I have lost my right arm. I have lost James Mordaunt."

There was dead silence. No one knew what to say. It was a supreme time.

"This is a very sad mishap. Can we do anything?"

"Dare you attack the lines with the infantry?" asked Roland.

Claverhouse said emphatically, "No!" and Morton said emphatically "No!"

"Then," said Roland, "I suppose we had better move back on the palace, and prepare for defence." So they formed the infantry, and Eddy and the Nawab were quietly told of what had happened. Neither of them said one word.

Nothing further occurred worthy

of remark that night; but when the Europeans were collected in the palace and were counted, 34 were missing, men, women, and children all told, and among them were James Mordaunt and Allan Evans.

The great outer gates were shut, and so began the siege of Belpore, now, with a dozen others, a matter of history. Our very first duty, however, is to follow James Mordaunt, who is in harder case than any of the others.

He had been looking, quite carelessly amused by the whole scene of the sulky rebels, when suddenly he saw a European face beside him, and saw that it was Allan Evans.

Jim was now only parallel with the advanced four of the Sikhs, and at a trot the slightest halt throws one behind. "Take my stirrup leather, Gray," he whispered to Allan, pausing for an instant. "Not like that man, behind my knee, not before, so! I will get you out of the mess you have got us all into. Run, man, and never leave go of me."

"Run as quick as you can," whispered Jim. "We must catch up the Sikhs. By golly, we are too late. Good bye, Allan Gray. All is forgiven between us, but hold on like grim death, old boy. I won't leave you."

The Sepoys were between them and the Sikhs fifty deep, with bayonets in their hands. Jim, crying out once more, "Hold on, old boy, and let us go at them," put spurs to his horse, and Allan quite unused to such rough play, let go and was swept down in the rush against them. Jim saw what had happened, and, after a glance behind, felt that he could do no more for poor Allan.

"So this is death," he said. "But they will be very sorry at Stretton for a time," and he rode straight and hard at the crowd before him.

His maddened horse, a furious young Romeo Australian colt, took him fairly and bravely into the mêlée. Bayonet squares have been broken certainly once or twice; notably at Herat the year before this; but in two seconds poor Jim's horse was dead with bayonet thrusts, never to see the long grey plains of Australia any more, and poor Jim was down, overpowered, but quite unwounded, never apparently to see the long brown sheets of heather on Longmynd any more.

His arms were tightly bound behind his back, and he had fought with such terrible ferocity that it was some time before he got breath to speak. When he had regained it, he saw a Havildar before him, and he said "Havildar, have my poor horse buried."

The Havildar only bowed his head, but Jim saw that it would be done. And catching the Havildar's eye for an infinitesimal part of a second, but from that moment he began to think that there were certain men in the mutiny who were not there of their own accord. In another minute he was led bound before the Rajah.

Jim began the conversation instantly. "I beg, sir, that our interview may be private. I have something very particular to say to you. See, I am bound hand and foot, and I know that I must die. I am not going to upbraid or insult you in any way, as I have done before. Your revenge is perfectly complete. I submit. I only ask one favour as a dying man."

"If you can tell me how, in asking it, I can make your end more bitter, you will do me such a favour, that I will have you shot, instead of burning you alive," said the Rajah.

"What is the good of talking tiger like that?" said Jim. "You would not go as far as that. I know I must die, and if you burn me (which will be a very bad precedent),

I pray that I may be burnt without being stripped. Will you grant that?"

The Rajah, curling his moustache, said, after nearly a minute, "Yes."

"And if you shoot me, which as a gentleman you ought not to do, you know, I hope that you will bury me at once, just as I stand."

The Rajah demurred at this, and began to ask why.

"Because I have letters on me; letters which will make wrath with people who have never offended you."

"Let me see them?" said the Rajah.

"Dare you come near a bound and disarmed man?" said James, "If so, come and open my tunic and look at them. You can read English enough to know that they are not political, but only compromise a woman. The mere post-marks will show you that." The Rajah undid Jim's tunic, and then his shirt, disclosing his brave white breast. Round his neck hung a slight chain, and on it were two letters, the first post-mark of which was "Church Stretton."

He put them back again. I cannot say that I know enough of the Indian mind to say why he did so; but he looked at Jim differently from before. He looked at him steadily for a few moments, and then Jim said—

"If I pledge you my word of honour that those letters only compromise a woman you never heard of; will you let them die with me?"

"Yes," said the Rajah; "you people of proper forms of civilization have not learnt the great art of lying yet. Some are getting to understand its value. Yes, I will believe you."

"And you will have me shot, old fellow, won't you. Don't burn me. It is so exceedingly nasty."

"You shall be shot, assuredly," said the Rajah. And Jim said—

"Thankee. You are a better fellow than I took you for. I say—"

The Rajah turned. "Allan Evans whom you have in your hands—I want to speak about him. Don't hurt him—he is mad. I say, sir, every nation spares mad people."

"I will not hurt a hair of his head," said the Rajah.

"I say, Rajah," bawled Jim, "When am I to be worked off."

"To-morrow morning," said the Rajah, waving his hand. "I have no priest for you. Stay, is not Allan a priest."

"Yes, he will do," said Jim. "Send him to me. Good bye." And the Rajah was gone. And Jim was put on horseback, and led off, and found himself soon in a dungeon of the Rajah's palace, thinking of his mother entirely now, and not of Mildred, and wondering very much whether the Doctor would be sorry, and thinking very deeply of all that he had heard in lecture about the necessity of Communion for sinners, and wishing very deeply that he could communicate now. We must leave our Jim in ill case, only to find him in worse.

The Rajah walked away with the Havildar who had looked on Jim. And the Rajah said to the Havildar, who was one of his nearly innumerable brothers, but the favourite, "I hope we shall not make a bad business of this. Why did not the men close on those cavalry to-night?"

"Because they were afraid."

"Why were they afraid?"

"Because their officers were not with them."

"Did you give the word of command?"

"Yes, and was laughed at in the face of the conquerors of India."

"Why will they not follow native officers as well as these cursed English?"

"Because we have no native officers who are capable of handling even a battalion with decency. Instruct na-

tive officers in the European tactics required for moving large bodies of men, and India would be lost to them in two years."

"I wish they would do it," said the Rajah.

"They are not such fools," said the Havildar.

"Suppose we make a mess of it, after all?" said the Rajah.

"We certainly shall do so," said the Havildar. "I told you so from the first."

"But we are safe in the rear," said the Rajah.

"With Lawrence, and 80 to 180,000 Sikhs ready for a burst on Bengal. Oh, yes, doubtless."

"They will not fight for them," said the Rajah.

"They held pretty close to them to-night," said the Havildar.

"What would you do?" said the Rajah.

"Blow my brains out with a pistol," said the Havildar.

"I suppose it will come to that; but I will have the lives of the Nawab and those English first. If the worst comes to the worst, you and I can get northward, into Nepaul, with the jewels. On our own bodies we can easily carry forty lacs. The sapphire and the emerald are worth forty lacs."

"But where is the market?" said the Havildar.

"Oh, with the Russians," said the Rajah. "They will buy *anything*. Alexandrofski would give double its price for the emerald, if he could only have the pleasure of saying at St. Petersburg that it had been bought from a Rajah, a rebel against the English, who had sent it through the hostile territory of Bokhara; which, by the way, I don't mean to do, because, if he buys it, he must send the money for it, and take it away on his own responsibility. I am not going to trust my jewels with either Khan or Ameer. You and I have a strong share of Mogul blood in us, you know, and that is what makes us such thundering thieves."

"What shall we do to-morrow morning, your highness?" said the Havildar.

"I thought you said we were to blow our brains out?"

"I have altered my opinion."

"Well, then, if I might hazard a remark, I should say, attack the Nawab at day-dawn. I am sick of affairs, and shall go to bed. I doubt we have made a mess of it."

CHAPTER LV.

He most certainly had.

I must explain once more that the Nawab's palace was built on the further side of a tall rock, overgrown with creepers and tropical vegetation, entirely obscured from the Rajah's palace, but communicating in every direction with the great caves of Belpore, forgotten by all but Moonshees. There was, if you remember, one opening out of these caves towards the palace of the Rajah, the one which Roland had seen with the Nawab. The Rajah knew that the rock dominated his palace, but with that sleepy stupidity and ignorance of tactics which beat the mutineers, he had cared nothing for it.

He approached his palace at the head of a long cavalcade of torch-bearers, well watched, though he little dreamt it. As the blazing procession neared the palace gate, there was a flash and a report about six hundred yards away, and looking up, a moving circle of light was seen to pause in the sky over-head, the corona round some saint's head, and then to drop rapidly on to the very roof of his palace. He had scarcely time to scream out an oath when there was the roar of an explosion inside, mixed with the crash of broken glass, and the yells of wounded or terrified servants. They were shelling his palace from the temples of Belpore.

From the sacred strongholds of the gods which he had worshipped so truly and so well, they were destroying the home of his delights, and the gods themselves sat, with their hands upon their knees, looking down upon the beauty and fury of Roland, and spake not one word, though he cried aloud to them, and cursed them and flattered them alternately.

One more shell, then another before day-dawn; they had guessed the angle well in the bright moon, and a hundred English hands were hard at work making new embrasures, which would be through the rock by morning. He could hear a blast go as he sat there dumbfounded. His palace was ruined. From this moment pity left the man's heart. From that moment he was a madman. He knew that in a few hours his palace would for the most part be untenable, unless he could storm the Nawab. He determined to begin the counter-siege the very next day.

They were not very long in their preparations. It would seem that they must win. There was nothing between two thousand good Indian soldiers with ten guns, and the British garrison, with the assistance of four hundred and fifty faithful native men, but the old high wall of the Nawab's palace. Even with eighteen-pounders they could make a breach in that, for there was not a gun mounted on it; they were fools, these English. They might shell our palace, but we would batter theirs.

Some said that there were earthworks inside the wall, which would have to be carried afterwards. There was a council of war over this matter, which came roughly to this. Who had seen them? Nobody of any consequence, it would seem. It now turned out that not one soul, as far as could be ascertained of the general population, had been admitted within the back-gates for above six months. Certain Nautch-girls deposed and made oath, that a certain Jew, their impressario, had told them, when in good humour, that there was an earthwork inside there as big as the railway embankment at Belasapore. But their words seemed as idle tales. And even if there were?

They skirmished up to the old wall and tempted the besieged with the silence of death in a lone place. The silence of the Australian desert round the dying solitary Wills, was not deeper than the silence about that deep-arched teak-gate, when the bugle sounded the two long-drawn breves "Cease firing."

It was ghastly. There was some devilish scheme in the minds of these English—*they* had ceased firing till then. But now once more, bang; crash the well-elevated mortars went on hurling the live vertical shells into that unutterable abomination, the palace of all delights of the Rajah: and it stands a draught-house to this day, with the cobra basking where the Nautch-girl had slept.

They maddened once more at the sound, and brought up their guns, mostly eighteen-pounders as it happened, and concentrated them on the gate. The roar and din of their own guns prevented them from hearing the other party firing, and when the gate was destroyed, after three hours, and they heard the guns of the besieged going still, they took heart, and fancied they dare not face them here, but would make their stand in an inner court.

There was a sudden, furious, and tumultuous rush through the gateway, their folly in attacking which ruined them more effectually than they would have been ruined otherwise. They poured in pell-mell and broke to right and left against an inner line of gabions and fascines, eight feet high, and perpendicular.

A few in the front saw what had happened, and cried out that *they* must retreat. The crowd of disor-

ganized Sepoys poured in still, a scarlet flood, through the black arch, spreading themselves right and left, and filling the space between the old wall and the earthworks. Native officers began to make it understood that they were in a trap, but it was utterly too late. Some few in the front, in sheer desperation, tried to get up the earthwork before them—did so, and fell dead by well-directed revolver-shots.

On this little space, between the two lines, Roland and the Nawab had trained five nine-pounders in embrasure. It had been done some time now, but the Nawab had managed so well that no one had known it. At the very height of all the confusion Eddy stood on the top of the battery, and looking down on the struggling mass of men, the front of whom saw the danger, and the rear of which kept pushing on, and cast his shako down among them, crying out, "Now, gentlemen, if you are ready, we are going to begin."

Of the ghastly slaughter which followed it would be ill to speak. The guns immediately in front of the mutineers were loaded with nails and fragments of horse-shoes, made handily into cartridges and served rapidly. Those two which enfiladed the crowded mass of men were served with grape, and crossed fire with the others. Existence became impossible, and retreat nearly so; for forty picked marksmen with Enfields (dear old arm! how well we have loved thee), shattered in on the confused crowd thronging the gateway in the almost hopeless effort to escape.

It was a ghastly business. Above fifty were smothered, as people are smothered in the rush out of a burning theatre, in their attempt to escape by the gate. Three hundred others lay about; two hundred and eighty dead in the narrow space between them and the old wall. About eighty were groaning and screaming horribly. A rapid council of war was held.

Claverhouse said, "In God's name, Roland, let the men fire on them, and put them out of their misery."

Roland said, "The men would not do it, mad as they are. I could not stand *that*. It would not do to tell in Europe."

"Well, it is not La Guerre," said Claverhouse, "but what *can* we do?"

Eddy had taken a man's ramrod, and carefully tied a white pocket handkerchief on to it. He now waved it about between Roland and Claverhouse.

"The boy is right," said Claverhouse, "but who is to carry it among these treacherous devils?"

"Why I, of course," said Eddy.

"Dare you?" said Claverhouse.

"Dare I?" said Eddy. "Come, you shall give no word of command. Ensign Evans absent without leave. That is *your* report to the Horse Guards. It is all right, I tell you."

Without waiting for another word, Eddy slipped down the bastion, and ran towards the now deserted gate.

They watched him go, a bright, pretty figure; blue, gold, and in white trousers, with his sword girt close up at his side; bare-headed, for he had thrown away his shako. He stepped lightly over dying and dead, and passed fearlessly out of the black gateway into the sunlight beyond for the *first* time.

"He is fearfully incautious," said Roland, emphatically.

"He is all right," said Claverhouse; "they won't harm *him*."

It would seem as if Claverhouse was right. Eddy returned in a few minutes, with the Rajah beside him, followed by a crowd of unarmed natives, who began to remove not only the wounded, but the dead. The Rajah had also an improvised white flag, a puggery tied on a cane covered with beads, and they stood as representatives while the work went on.

Eddy bowed and scraped, with the pocket handkerchief on his ramrod. The Rajah salaamed, and was very polite. Claverhouse and Roland watched him.

He counted the dead and the wounded until the very last of the wounded; then, as this man was being carried out, he spoke a few words to Eddy, and Eddy followed him to the gate. The Rajah uncovered the face of the dying man, and looked at it; and in the next instant a dozen men had overpowered Eddy, and carried him, struggling, out into the sunlight, beyond the gate for the *second* time.

There was no time to *think* even. Eddy was gone, and gone behind eight hundred ranged muskets. Double fortifications may tell in two ways.

CHAPTER LVI

STRETTON was not the less beautiful and quiet, however, than heretofore. Not the less quiet, until one week when two catastrophes came together. Monday morning and Saturday night were between them, but the Mordaunts and Evanses always speak of them now as happening on the same day.

While the Nawab and Roland were shelling the Rajah's palace, and while the Rajah was doing the best he could, certain things had happened in Shropshire worthy of remark.

The Dean had proposed to Aunt Eleanor, on the grounds that they were very fond of one another, and that if they did not marry now they would soon be too old. And I regret to say that Aunt Eleanor returned for answer that "she had seen enough of that kind of thing, and was not going to make a fool of herself at her time of life."

After this Ethel had a very hard time of it with her. Of course she could not know what had happened; but even Deacon Macdingaway told her, in confidence, that she had been to him about some geranium cuttings, and that she had so sniffed and squiffed at him that he was certain something had gone wrong between her and the Dean.

Sunday morning, however, they all went to church to hear the Dean preach, even Deacon Macdingaway For it got about that the native troops in Bengal were up and murdering their officers. And the Dean preached on it, and preached well. He thought, in conclusion, that it was the duty of every person capable of thinking, to consider whether or no we had done our duty by India. That it was our duty to pray for the widows and orphans of British officers and soldiers, and so on. A sermon of good common-places, excellent in their way. In the *end* of his sermon the man broke out, and he left some of his congregation sobbing.

"In the very depth of the darkness of this furious embroglio, the extent of which no man can measure, the end of which no man can see, I, who preach to you, have three boys, more deeply dear to me than my own life. They were committed to me by a man I respect and reverence beyond most men, and I did my best by them. Clever, petulant, furious, fantastic, you know them; you can all say that of them. Innocent, kindly, brave; you can all say *that* of them. The dark cloud which has been hanging over India for so long has settled down now, and in the deepest, blackest night of it are Roland and Edward Evans and James Mordaunt.

"There is a dark night of deep, dim darkness which is coming in this land. A night in which a man shall feel for his fellow, and say, Where is he? Our boys are in the midnight of it. I cannot ask you to pray for their souls, but I ask you to pray that their hands may be strengthened, and that they may die so that

the heathen may say, 'Behold how these Christians love one another!'"

There are landowners and landowners. For centuries these Evanses and Mordaunts had been living among their people and doing their duty. One house was Whig and the other Tory; but they had minded the poor and done their duty by the land so long that the very cadets of the two houses were to them as their own flesh and blood. I express no opinions, but facts. It *was* so, and what is more, for good or for evil, it *is* so. You must make the best of it.

I never in my life heard any expression of opinion in an English church. There was one on this occasion in the churchyard, however. The Dean was mobbed for information. He had none. There were the great facts—that the Bengal sepoys had risen, and that the garrison of India consisted of two cavalry and eighteen infantry regiments of Europeans, among a population of 180,000,000, and that these three boys, Roland, Jim, and Eddy were in the thickest of the whole business.

It would have been ill for the Rajah had he been in the quiet English churchyard that evening, among the graves of the men of Trafalgar and Waterloo, of Seringapatam, Laswaree, and Sobraon. Give a people a history, O statesmen, and they are unconquerable for three generations. A "cry" is what one wants to keep a nation alive. As a political cry, "Reform" means just nothing. As a war cry, "Eylau," "Waterloo," or "Island No. 10" mean less. Yet we have put through many things by the power of those cries.

We put through the Indian mutiny with no definite cry at all. It was amorphous, hideous, fantastic; not reducible to words. The poor folks in the Shropshire churchyard only swarmed after the rector, and, getting what information they could, waved their hands wildly, and wished they had been there. For not only Roland, and Eddy, and Jim were there; but Bill, and Tom, and Harry, and the young man, whose name was disputed, who had married Stokes's girl Jane, and left her in the family-way.

But the Rajah of Bethoor did not know of all this. He had got Jim, and Eddy, and his jewels, and, in addition, a most tremendous licking. But the Rector and Aunt Eleanor could not know of this.

They separated from the villagers as soon as they could. Ethel and John Mordaunt were following them, but Aunt Eleanor turned to them and said—

"Go home, you two."

She said nothing but that; but they went.

When they were alone, she said—

"Why don't you put your whole heart into your sermon? You are as bald as can possibly be for twenty minutes, and then you burst out and speak like a man."

"One must spin it out in these country places," said the Dean (Rector).

"I don't see that," said Aunt Eleanor. "I hope, however, talking of spinning things out, that you have duly considered the foolish nonsense you spoke me last week."

"Why?"

"Because if you were to repeat it, you would have a different answer."

"Eleanor, will you have me?"

"Yes, my beloved; my only hope; so dearly loved, and truly, for so many years. We have lost most of our lives, dear, yet some remains. Take me to thee, good kind heart, and we will weep for Eddy together. Oh, my darling! oh, my pretty boy! I have none left but you now, dear. Don't leave a poor old woman like me."

So, after so many years, these two hearty souls drew together over what they thought was the grave of a boy they had both loved well.

CHAPTER LVII.

AUNT ELEANOR, I fear, lay awake weeping the most of that night. She was like the

> "Old yew that graspeth at the stones
> That name the underlying dead";

the fibres of her heart were coarse, but they were very strong, and they had wrapped themselves round Eddy as they had never wrapped themselves about any one before, and she must entirely believe that Eddy was dead. She called herself an old fool, but that was not much good; and on the Monday morning something occurred so very terrible that she scarcely thought, more than eight hours a day, of Eddy at all.

Mildred Maynard had been confined, and her mother-in-law had been very tender with her, and had nursed her well. Not one word had been said for weeks about the old letters of poor Jim, or about Jasper Meredith. Her schemes were quite in abeyance, but ready for new motion. But if the girl, in the terror of her first confinement, was glad to receive the attentions of Mrs. Maynard, it was most undoubted that when she had nearly recovered, and had her baby by her side, those attentions got more and more repugnant day by day.

They grew at last perfectly unbearable. Mrs. Maynard's very way of coming in and out of the room was perfectly unbearable to Mildred. Women have some very strange instincts. I know a man, a hard-working man, a very good man, a man whom *I* do not mind: and I know also three refined ladies who hate his presence in the room where they are. And I do not know why, and never *shall* know. Mildred's instincts against Mrs. Maynard had been pretty strong before her boy was born, but then she had been a silly puling coward. Since this young gentleman had begun to study the great arts of kicking and yelling, Mrs. Maynard the younger was quite a different person, to Mrs. Maynard the elder's great astonishment.

Mrs. Maynard the elder had felt the storgè herself, but, like a fool as she was, had never calculated upon its appearing in her daughter-in-law. She was very fond of fowls, and would kick a *laying* hen any day, but was too wise, wearing dainty silk stockings, to kick a hen with chickens. She knew from experience that she would be pecked. She never had brains enough to think that Mildred Evans, the sister of Roland and Edward, worth ten of her, would dare to peck her now she had a boy: she all time having those letters in her possession. She never thought of that.

Mildred lay and thought of it in her bed, however, with her baby beside her. She of course would have liked to consult Aunt Eleanor, but Aunt Eleanor, dearly as she loved her, was a terror to her. She had come to see her once or twice and the only effect which it had on her nerves was the same as if a barrel of gunpowder was in the room and Aunt Eleanor was sitting on it smoking a short pipe, her hatred for Mrs. Maynard was so great. Ethel of course could not be consulted, and so Mildred, like a true and worthy Evans, thought out the matter for herself and consulted her baby: who apparently agreed.

Her husband, good old Maynard of the four-oar, used to come and sit with her many times a day. And *he* was very kind, and good, and gentle, and most enormously delighted with her baby; and one day, when he and Mildred were playing with the baby, she got the baby to sleep between them and said, "Husband dear, lay your head on the pillow beside me. I am going to speak in whispers to you."

"Why so?" said Maynard.

"Because your mother is listening at the door," she said, with a smile.

Maynard walked swiftly to the door,

and Mrs. Maynard was not nimble enough to get away before he saw her. Even bulls get ill-tempered at times, and he said—

"Mother, mind your own business."

He was still cross when he went back to his wife, but she positively refused to speak to him while he had a cloud between his eyebrows. His brow was soon clear, and she began.

"Dear husband, I have to talk to you about one thing very particularly. Jim Mordaunt, dear good innocent Jim Mordaunt, loved me better than a brother loves his sister, and he has behaved so well about it."

"Yes, I knew he loved you," said her husband, in a whisper. "I have had deep grief over it, wife."

"What need? Except that I was a silly coward and your mother was wicked, what need? We were brought up boy and girl together, and I thought he loved me only as a sister: but I found it was otherwise, and he went."

"But Jim must have been untrue to me for you to find it out, my love, my darling."

"Never!—never for one instant by look or word. James Mordaunt is a gentleman, and he loves you."

"But do you love him, wife?" said Mordaunt.

"Love him! Love poor wild Jim! Of course I do. Is there any one who knows his true worth who does not? If my tongue refused to say that I loved Jim, I hope it may drop out of my head. But not as I do you. There is no one like you in the whole world, dear.

"God bless you, sweetheart," said Maynard.

"Now," said Mildred, "Jim has written to me three times, and I have replied to him three times. I have concealed this fact from you, not because I distrusted your noble nature, but because since we were married I have been nervous and hysterical. I am so no longer. This little fellow has cured me of nervousness; and a wife who could not trust a man like you may drown herself in the Severn for me. I cannot show you my letters to poor Jim; you must trust me for them. But with regard to Jim's letters to me I require you to read them."

"Why should I?"

"To prove how innocent he is."

"I do not care to read them," said Maynard.

"Aye, but I insist that you should," she replied.

"Where are they?"

"Your mother has got them. She has taken them from me, and during my nervous time has been holding them over me in terror.—Don't swear, dear—don't swear. Be quiet with her and request her to show them to you. I will give you from memory, if you care, my letters to Jim. I have told him I loved him, you know, and so do you. Go to your mother, and fetch those letters."

He left her with a kiss. He was not very long gone: and he came back with the letters in his hand. The whole trouble was over and done now, and the verdict pronounced.

"Poor old Jim!"

There was peace and entire reconciliation. Till they be under the grass together there will be no difference between those two any more.

What passed between Maynard and his mother no man knows exactly. He told Roland that he gently and kindly asked her for those letters of Jim's, and that she at once gave them to him. And then he says that she began to gibber and fume at him, as he thought, angrily. That is all he knows. The Dean is of opinion that she was trying to say something to him, but that her tongue refused its office. Whether it was anger, scorn, or forgiveness none can say, for he

had scarcely been with his wife and baby again five minutes, laughing over poor Jim's letters, when a scared maid came in, and called him out. "His mother was ill," she said. She was not only ill, but dead.

Now, it so happened that at this very time Aunt Eleanor was determined to go over and face "that woman," and on the Monday morning Eleanor came to her and said,—

"Miss Evans, you are not going to the Barton to-day?"

"Of course I am, child. I am going to have it out with that woman. She is making mischief between husband and wife; and if the husband was a chimney-sweep and the wife a ballet-dancer, any one who made mischief between them ought to be hung, and I am going over to tell her that *she* ought to be hung."

"My dear Miss Evans, one moment," said Ethel, kneeling down, "you must *not* go."

"Why not? That woman, indeed! Why not?

"Because she is dead," said Ethel.

"What did she die of?" said Aunt Eleanor, puzzled and scared.

"I don't know," said Ethel.

"I don't believe that the woman knows herself what she *did* die of," said Aunt Eleanor. "If she did, she would say it was something else."

"But she is dead, Miss Evans."

"Fiddle-de-dee," said Aunt Eleanor. "You take my cob. He will let you open the gates, you know, and ride across the country to Shrewsbury, and get Watson. The woman is in a fit. I will go over and nurse her."

But, in spite of all Aunt Eleanor's unbelief, Ethel succeeded in showing her that Mrs. Maynard, of Maynard's Barton, was dead. And Miss Evans walked up and down the room, rubbing her nose.

Not for long. She sat down and began to cry.

"She was a very good woman, my dear," she said to Ethel, through her tears. "I should have liked to have given her a piece of my mind before she went, but it is too late now. I know that she said I was a grumpy old toad—Myrtle and Gray told me that. But it is all forgiven *now*. Think of the things I have said of her, my dear."

And, indeed, they were many; and the week went on.

She talked every day to the Dean, her old lover, soon to be her husband. She talked very pleasantly. "Sir, we are too old to be married. They will laugh at us. But I love you, my dear, very much indeed, in spite of your wig, which must have grey let into it till it matches my hair. Grey as I am, I am not going to the altar with a man in a chestnut wig. Have you any objections to Eddy as our son and heir? If he comes home—if he comes home."

"The boy will come home right enough," said the Dean, "and he shall be our son and heir."

And so the week went on. Mrs. Maynard was buried on Saturday, and the Dean read the service. *That* was over. And he came over to tea with Miss Evans and Ethel at the Grange, and on the table lay a newspaper—the *Shropshire Chronicle*.

They had no daily newspaper. The *Shropshire Chronicle* gave them their latest news, and all three tried to get hold of it, but the Dean got it, and read it. He turned ghastly pale, and looked at the two women.

"Eleanor," he said, "sit there, and Ethel, you sit there, and do not move one inch."

"Is there disaster?" said Ethel.

"Yes," said the Dean. "Sit still, and listen, without cries and without tears. O Lord, if I were there!" and he began to read:—

"Belpore is utterly lost, following Delhi and Meerut. A young moonshee has arrived at Barrackpore, who tells us that the native troops rose on the night of the 14th, and murdered most of

their officers, and many of the English ladies. The rest of our fellow-countrymen, including the judge, collector, assistant-magistrate, about 160 European troops, with such of the women and children not brutally murdered, have taken refuge in the Palace of the Nawab of Belpore. He spells badly the names of the officers actually murdered in the first onslaught, but we make them to be Rossiter, Street, Murray, Jones, and Towsey. An attack on the native lines was made that evening by Captain Claverhouse and Lieutenant Evans, which seems to have been perfectly successful.' Ethel, sit still. Do not make my task too bitter."

"I only crushed my hands together."

"Listen, and be quiet," said the Dean.

"'We regret to say, however, that in this demonstration on the native line Cornet Mordaunt got separated from his troop, and was cut to pieces.'"

Ethel rose with a wild moan which would have broken your heart, but the Dean was before her, with his hands spread out, as though he were going to mesmerize her.

"Ethel! Ethel! I want every nerve in your body. There is a grief greater than yours. Sit down." And she sat down, rocking herself to and fro, and saying, "Jim! Jim! Jim!"

"Now go on," said Aunt Eleanor, "and let us have it over. How did my boy die? That is what I want to know."

The Dean read out from the paper. "An attack was made in the morning on the Palace of the Nawab. It was repulsed with triumphant success. But we are sorry to say that Ensign Evans, another of our bonny Shropshire boys, coxswain of the Shropshire crew, who beat the London Rowing Club, was seized by the Rajah of Belpore and murdered while he was carrying a flag of truce to make arrangements for the rebel wounded."

"If that is true, as no doubt it is," said Aunt Eleanor, sharply, "it is just as I wished it. I knew my boy would die game. Just read out that passage again, will you, my good soul."

He did so.

"Carried a flag of truce to remove the rebel wounded. Yes, just like him. Now, if Ethel and you will go and behowl yourselves, I will do it alone. Go."

CHAPTER LVIII.

At Belpore men were mad, as men are in revolutions. As mad as they were when they shot my hero, the Archbishop of Paris, on the barricades. If Saint Paul himself had stood between the British and the Rajah's people, Saint Paul would have been shot down.

Little brown youths, nearly naked, lest any trace of Europeanism should be found about them, were sent out as scouts and spies, to find some intelligence of Jim, Eddy, and Allan. Not one was unfaithful, for they were relations of the Nawab; but only one came back.

He reported that he could find out nothing more than this: Jim and Eddy were both alive, and Allan was apparently at liberty, though not allowed to join the European garrison. *Jim* was in the Rajah's dungeon: there was no doubt about *that*. Where Eddy was he could not in any way tell.

Roland, the Nawab, and Claverhouse cross-questioned him on this subject, but the young man stuck to his text. He was perfectly and absolutely certain that Eddy was not killed. They had to be contented with it. They gave this young man ghee, rice, fresh-killed chicken, and all kinds of nasty things, in which his soul delighted.

Meanwhile, the Nawab had a job

in hand to which he took more kindly to than the making of kites on the Franklin plan, kites with a wire in the string. He had flown those kites several times in dangerous weather, and neglecting the necessity of communication with the earth, had twice been knocked head over heels; which will ultimately be the fate of Pepper with his mammoth Saxton battery. His new employment was making embrasures in a rock, and dropping live shells on to the top of his beloved Rajah's palace.

He was intensely delighted with this amusement. His French wife said that he had acquired a nouvelle jeunesse since he had taken to this amusement. She brought her work down into the cave, and superintended.

When they sent off one of their mortars, she said "Piff" and putting down her knitting, looked where it dropped, would occasionally say "Bon!" but only occasionally; you must remember that her nation had burnt more gunpowder than any nation in the world ever did. And moreover, when the Americans talk about *their* war being the most tremendous ever seen on the face of the earth, they are talking terrible balderdash; which, however, is no business of mine.

Madame Nawab brought her work down into the caves and superintended. Her father had been an officer of artillery.

Roland came upon her with her eye to the sight of a newly-trained mortar, and her needle-work in her hand. "Crac flan," said Madame. "Fire hims off, Roland. Crève-cœur, make to tell them to fire hims off. We shall now see explosions in his palace."

Bang went the gun, and certainly the French lady was right. In the confused mass of buildings there was a sudden light, and the roar of the explosion reached them half a minute afterwards.

"Why did you call me Crève-cœur, Madame?" asked Roland.

"Broke heart. Why did I call you so? If you have heart, is it not broke? She you love be gone for all, lost for ever, for you shall never see her no more. Her brother lost and left for torture, you shall never see him no more; and your own brother Edie gone to torture, him whom you was to love so well. Ask me why I call you Crève-cœur!"

"Madame," said Roland, "you cannot possibly conceive that I do not feel the dreadful position of my dearest friends."

"That is what I say," said Madame. "You have heart enough to have it broken. Next to the French there are none like the English. But you suppress your fury; we demonstrate it, as *you* know."

And Madame went on with her needlework, looking out from time to time to see if the shells dropped well.

And Roland went for a walk round to look at things, and the result of his thoughts was—

"Fancy there being only eighteen miles of salt water between the two nations, and not one thought in common. Even in sentiment, for which her nation is so famous, she misses her point with me, a typical Englishman. We must go beyond France for our true allies. I would that the good God had sent me Hans and Gottfried here. It is all very well to argue and jaw, but if any man doubts that the next row-royal will not be between the Teutonics (with the Slavonics) against the Latins (with some of the Celts), he had better take his needlework down and sit beside Madame."

That is what Roland thought. I am never answerable for my characters

CHAPTER LIX.

JIM was an affectionate fellow, who could love more than most men; but, on the other hand, he never throughout his life got on ten minutes without an enemy. He never had more than one enemy at a time certainly, but that enemy was, for that time, an enemy with a vengeance. His enemy just now was the Rajah; and the Rajah was perfectly aware of the fact, and kept away from him. He did not know exactly what that young man might do. He had all the intelligence of an Asiatic.

Jim was tightly ironed, hand and foot, with a kind of iron or "darby," introduced into the station by his friend the assistant-magistrate, and at once adopted by the Rajah. He was in utter and complete darkness, and knew that he could only see the light to die. So he said his prayers four times over; and every time he thought of Mildred, he prayed to God to forgive him. And at last he never thought of her at all.

How time went in this utter darkness he could not make out. He got hungry, and reached about in the darkness to find food, and he found rice, ghee, and water, and when he had eaten he fell asleep and dreamt of the old four-oar, and the Greek prose lecture, and the Dean, and the Doctor, indiscriminately.

He awoke, and he lay awake in the darkness for a long time. The boy's faith was simple and pure—not a bad one to face death with. The Doctor was to him the incarnation of human wisdom, and the Doctor had always impressed on them, that those who believed in the great sacrifice, and repented them truly of their sins, and *were in charity with all men*, would be after death received into and educated for higher things than they could possibly be educated for here. Consequently, this young man, having learnt logic, came to the conclusion that he must forgive the Rajah, who was going to shoot him.

And he did it. The process of mind which he crawled through in doing it, was crab-like, wild, and fantastic beyond measure—yet he did it. His ultimate result was that when all was said and done, the Rajah had not behaved much worse to him than he had to Eddy at school in old times. That if he had been in the Rajah's place, he would have done much as the Rajah had, and that the Rajah having him shot and buried at once, with the letters upon him not burnt, was decidedly gentlemanly on the part of the Rajah.

So the Rajah was forgiven, and Jim was ready to die. He would have liked to communicate before death—only once—but it was not to be. That *was* a little hard to the poor lad. It was Sunday, if he could calculate, and when at this moment the boys might be kneeling at the altar-rails, and the Doctor and the second master coming solemnly round and giving them that to eat and drink, while he should eat and drink no more, save with his Father

in the kingdom of Heaven. The thought of the old chapel broke the boy down. He moaned "Oro, ploro, adoro," and felt in the hideous black night for the wall that he might turn his face to it. The Rajah was safe enough with him now.

Through the dim arches of the great dungeon in which he lay bound there came a light, two natives bearing torches, the Rajah following them, and Allan with his hand on the Rajah's shoulder. They did not come near him, but passed on in close conversation, and the light died out again.

"By Jove," said Jim, "what a clever fellow that is. I see what he is at. He is deluding the Rajah, and keeping his life in his hand to save the British. What a fool the Rajah must be to play at chess with *him*. Eddy says he has the head of a prime-minister."

Three hours before, Jim would have taken a very different view of Allan's conduct—called him thief, dog, renegade, everything that was bad. But now that he had said to his God the three great words, he only saw in the darkness the handkerchief of St. Veronica, and in front of the figure of the Doctor, in simple white surplice, preaching with uplifted hand the sermon which made them so silent. "Speak not evil one of another."

He was right. After an hour's sleep he was awakened by a candlelight upon his eyes. He looked up and saw Allan; dressed like a native Indian, all in white, who laughed at him, and said,—

"Get up, and let me undo your irons. Be quick, silent, and swift. Eddy's life depends on your doing exactly as I tell you. He risked his life once for you when you were bathing at Gloucester; if you are a man born of woman, risk yours for him now. I say nothing of the saving of your own life, for you come of a family not accustomed to fear. Now your irons are off, strip quickly and put on my clothes."

Jim obeyed at once. "What am I to do?"

"Get down to the nullah in these clothes; I have been seen in them, and they will not know you from me. I am in the Rajah's confidence; I have turned him round my finger. Go straight down to the old Moonshee's house, and you will find Eddy there, his son-in-law is protecting him. Don't try to get to the Nawab's, but try to get to the river. Brown yourselves, your Moonshee's son-in-law will show you how, and go in Dhoties, as nearly bare as possible, for you may have to swim. Scarcely any of the native troops know the person of any King's officer. I have everything perfectly arranged; pray be quick."

"But you?" said Jim.

"Oh, I am perfectly comfortable. I shall sit here till you are safe, and then I shall go to him and tell him what I have done. He will be cross, I know, but he loves a joke."

"I say, old man," said Jim, standing with his trousers off, "just think twice about this job. Is there no danger in it? You are fitter to die than me, being a religious fellow, given to all kinds of good works, and I am only a worthless bullying ass. In the eternal fitness of things, if there is any danger, I ought to incur it, not you."

"I am perfectly safe," said Allan, quietly going on with his toilet. "By-the-by, I made the acquaintance of your sister (Miss Mordaunt) in Shropshire the other day; if you are at Stretton before me, would you kindly take a message?"

"With all pleasure."

"Tell her that I did the very best I could for *her*, and tell her to tell Miss Evans that I did the best I possibly could for Eddy. You will give that message. Go—hurry—time is very short."

Stupid dear old Jim did not see that Allan was *dying* for him because he was Ethel's brother.

"Are you quite sure that you will not come to grief for this matter?" said he.

"Perfectly sure," said Allan, smilingly; "the Rock of Ages was not cleft in vain. Go, hurry. This is the first time I have worn the dress you have on now. The pass-word to-night is 'Vishnu.' I kept a handkerchief over my face as I came, keep one over yours as you go. Go straight to the old Moonshee's house, and the love which you gave there once shall be returned seven-fold."

"You are a thundering brick," said Jim; and he went.

No European eye ever saw Allan again. The last ever heard of him was this. Of course those who told it knew more, but being concerned in the crime, the tellers said as little as they could.

The palace of the Rajah had now been diligently shelled for two days, and was scarcely habitable. The native troops had departed for the main wasps' nest at Delhi; the Rajah felt the ground slipping under his feet, for, like the unmistakeable hum of the earthquake before it heaves and shatters, there had come to him the news that the Sikhs were true to their salt, and he heard the tramp of 120,000 of them, heavy as the moan of distant thunder, precise and terrifying as the death-watch. The man saw his game was lost, went mad, and knew no pity.

It is perfect folly, in times of peace and security, to judge people's actions in times of danger and ferocity. Breaking the ice by cannon-shot under the feet of the camp-followers at the passage of the Beresina, seems to us now a horrible thing; but let us not be too sure that any one of us would not have done it under the circumstance. If your soldiery are not ferocious, and determined to put the thing through, you had better cash up, and remain at peace. Ferocity is necessary in the field. Certain matters, however, which had happened that night at Belpore cannot be called war in any way.

Hanging rebels is a very old institution. If I was a rebel and was unsuccessful, the last words I should write would be to tell my wife instantly to prosecute the Westminster Insurance Office if they hesitated for an instant to pay up. Poor Maximilian knew his chances and took them. If a revolutionist will not carry his heart in his hand, he had better stay at home.

But things were done with women and children that night at Belpore, of which there is no need to speak. If there were, one *would* speak. The Indians have learnt their lesson, and we can leave them alone until they misbehave again.

And the Rajah had been seeing to it all. And he had a *bonne bouche* left for the end. Eddy had escaped, but there was Jim.

The man never touched stimulants from one year's end to another, any more than does the goat, the ram, the bull, or the tiger. Yet for lust or ferocity he would have matched the worst man in any of our great towns.

He had the lust of blood on him to-night. Matters which shall be nameless had gone on. He must fly that very night; and there was none left but Jim Mordaunt. The shells so diligently plied by Roland and the Nawab were shattering his palace of delight to pieces, and he must go that night. He and his brother the Havildar had the jewels sewn safe, and the horses ready. There was only Jim Mordaunt.

Sitting there drinking coffee and smoking, with his brother leaning against him, came the figure of a British officer, hurriedly attired, with his tunic unbuttoned and his white breast bare. He started up, and was utterly astonished to find that it was Allan.

In Jim's clothes. "Where is Mor-

daunt?" asked the Rajah, "have you prepared him for death?"

"No, for life," cried Allan. "He was the brother of her I loved beyond all the world; and I have given my life for his. He is beyond your power now. Dog, villain, pirate, hound, thief, I have given him my life. Take it. You think that you will have vengeance. Idiot, ass, Ethel will know that I died for her brother, and that is enough for me."

One dare go no further. Some say that his body was the last thrown into the well. Some say that his body was never thrown in at all, but that he underwent a very different fate. However, no one ever saw him any more.

But that night the Rajah set fire to his palace and rode away, carrying, with the assistance of his brother, £200,000 worth of jewelry. Some say he is in Cabool, some in Nepaul, but no man knows where is. He cast the dice, and they went wrong.

The die rang sideway as it fell,
Rang sharp and keen,
Like a man's laughter heard in hell,
Far down Faustine.

CHAPTER LX.

THE main body of the mutineers had gone to Delhi, but quite enough were left to keep our little garrison on the alert. A sortie was quite impossible, and Claverhouse and Roland gave up Jim and Eddy as lost boys.

After the burning of the Rajah's palace; (which they believe to this day they did themselves), they tried a sortie or two, but it was no good whatever. The rebels had been reinforced by others, and were in a strong position on the river, between them and Delhi.

Meanwhile the Sikhs were coming with Lawrence, though they knew nothing of that, and Cordery had so far misrepresented matters, as to persuade the General that it would be better to put a European regiment between Delhi and the rebel regiments at Belpore. There was not the least necessity for it, but Cordery got his way, and got leave to advance with one troop of his own regiment, four companies of the 201st, a company of native artillery, in the direction of Belpore, to see if the garrison were alive.

Of course it was very wrong of Cordery, he has been often told so. He however had such a strong feeling for our Shrewsbury boys, that he could not help it. Our fellows advanced to the river, through the jungle, and on showing themselves had fire opened on them by the rebels.

Upon which Roland and Claverhouse, now silent for a long time, sent a shell, bang, into the air, which came down, whiz, into the middle of the river, and on bursting, sent up a column of water six feet high.

"Signal + 2° to him," said Jones, R. E. "He has his elevation too low. He will be dropping his shells among us directly. What a pity it is that cavalry officers should be trusted with mortars."

The next shell went better, and dropped on the right side of the river. Still it did no harm.

The rebels were laughing at both parties. The newly arrived Europeans seemed to decline to fire, and as for the shells from the palace, if they got troublesome, they could shift. They were rather astonished, however, after an hour, by the newly arrived Europeans opening on them with a fury and ferocity which made them move with a vengeance.

Every man among the newly arrived Europeans was loading and firing at them as fast as it was possible. The guns were being served with parade rapidity; in one moment this apparently causeless din began. In one minute they saw the cause of it, and as well as they could opened fire; but not on the European troops

—on Jim and on Eddy, swimming across the river, as they had swum together at Gloucester in the old times.

The Europeans maddened. From their naked bodies they could see that the two swimmers were British, they plied their work fast and furiously; still the river was two hundred yards across, and the water was dashed into little jets of foam by the rebel bullets.

The wrath, rage, and noise of that three minutes was forgotten by none who saw it. At last, just as the two swimmers were nearing the shore, Jim sailing in Eddy's wake like a convoy, a bullet hit something else than the water, and Eddy put up his two hands and cried out, "Jim! Jim! I am wounded."

The bullet had gone into the boy's shoulder-blade, but Jim had his left arm round him in one instant, and swimming with his right, brought him ashore. The old bathing catastrophe was well avenged *now*.

CHAPTER LXI.

The siege of Belpore got more and more in favour of the besieged as time went on. The flight of the Rajah was enormously in their favour. The fire upon them, slight and ineffectual as it always had been, now ceased entirely. Madame Nawab, who had seen, during her Algerian campaigns, pretty nearly as much of this sort of work as any one, announced her intention of going to church the very next Sunday but four, down past the lines, and, indeed, she accomplished that feat successfully, without the slightest danger. While troop-ship after troop-ship was crowding sail and steam from England, the back of the thing was nearly broken.

The besieged at Belpore heard, for a time, hot and fierce firing across the river, and guessed rightly that the 201st had come after them. One glorious day, towards evening, they heard the British bugles under their walls, and knew that they were free. The rebels, finding themselves in a perfectly untenable position, had retreated. The 201st, having searched their position with shell, now cautiously crossed the river, and marched in under the old gate-way, in front of the new earth-works, which had saved the Nawab's palace, Eddy and Jim leading the way.

To say what extreme extravagances were committed, would take a volume. The Nawab executed a solemn dance composed for the occasion. His wife never rebuked him at all, but sat on the top of a gabion, and stitched away. "He has the Orleans Anglomania," she said. "It affects some minds. For me, I am Tricoteuse. It arrives to me to knit and stitch through revolutions. Twice in Algeria, February in Paris, June in Paris, and now, once more, regard you, in India. Tiens! perhaps I shall sit and sew in Paris when the Devil comes for that Dog." For Madame was of the Democratic.

The end came soon after; there is but little to tell of it but what you know. Enough to say that the 201st were behind Peel in the attack on Delhi, and that Roland volunteered and took part in some of the most terrible street-fighting ever seen.

But as ship-load after ship-load of the maimed came back; as ships came back not bringing wounded men, but news of dead, we began, if you remember, to calm down. It had been our greatest and most fearful disaster, and we all looked a little older and more worn.

There had scarcely been a family not in mourning over our quarrel with the Russians. But in front of these glorious Russians, who are doing well by the world, we had been loyally backed by the French; the war had been a man's war, and we had lost only men. But here we had lost

women and children. Few nations have ever gone through a darker hour than the earlier part of 1858.

I hear the ringing words in my ears now, given by a pilot from a leaping whale-boat, just as the great ship was beginning to move upon her 14,000 miles' course—"They have got Delhi!"

One lived in those times. We were dull, sickened, disheartened, and captious, so we never truly roused to the American war, which was extremely lucky, for more than one half of this nation was in favour of the South. The French insulted us, and we insulted them in return, and set the volunteers in motion. But we wanted rest, and, thank God, we have had it.

CHAPTER LXII.

EIGHT months passed. Longmynd, Lawley, and Caradoc, towering up into the summer sun, and Pulverbatch Grange swept and garnished. Aunt Eleanor dressed in purple and pearl-grey, with a grand kind of lace cap, looking magnificent. No Ethel here to-day. All by herself, alone.

"Bother George Mordaunt!" she said. "Why on earth he could not let an old woman like me be married without public *spectacle* I can't think. And the Dean is a goose about it, also. I shall look like a perfect fool beside Ethel. However, I have not submitted to have bridesmaids. *That* is a comfort. I certainly am a fool to have dressed two hours before the time. Who is that, Eliza? I can see no one."

A maid came in and said that Sir Jasper Meredith was coming in, and what is more Sir Jasper Meredith *came* in, with only one stick, and a large bunch of Cape jasmine in his button-hole.

"You look mighty fine, Jasper," said Aunt Eleanor. "Do you know that I am going to be married in public this morning?"

"*I* know," said Sir Jasper. "Do you know that *I* am going to be married in public this morning?"

"The man is out of his mind," said Aunt Eleanor.

"Indeed, I think he is. But I have as much right to get married as ——"

"Well, my dear Jasper, I will agree with you that we are a pair of fools."

"Then don't bother," said Sir Jasper; "I tell you that I have put it all before Mary Maynard, and she is perfectly willing; as willing as a girl could be. I am very fond of her, and she is very fond of me. If it had not been for the poor woman who is dead, I would have married her before. I pointed out to Mary Maynard the great advantages of the match, and the fact that I could not possibly live long. Whereupon, to my intense delight, she burst into a fury of tears, and said that I was not what she had thought me, but a wicked, cold-hearted little villain. The girl's heart is in the right place, Miss Evans, after all. I got her quieted, and had a special license from the Archbishop at once. Come along, you and I together. We are both going to make fools of ourselves."

"I am not sure of that," said Aunt Eleanor."

There was a great crowd in Stretton churchyard. It had got about first that Captain Roland Evans was to be married to Miss Mordaunt, and that Major Edwardes, their old friend and neighbour, one of the greatest of Indian heroes, was to be his best man, along with Mr. Edward Evans and Captain James Mordaunt. Then it got about that Miss Evans was to be married to the Rector on the same day; and lastly, that Sir Jasper Meredith was to marry Miss Mary Maynard, of the Grange.

There was a great crowd. They

hired omnibuses from Shrewsbury, and stood in rows on the grave-turf of the silent dead beneath them, to look at these three boys, Roland, Eddy, and Jim, whom they had seen winning a foolish boat-race, as it were but yesterday, but had since, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, been into the fiery furnace of the Indian mutiny, and had come out unscathed.

They all met in the church, coming from the Rectory, without seeing the populace, but the people knew that they were coming their way, for the carriages of half the county were at the Lych-gate, and the Shropshire county gentry, a thing which will pass one supposes in time, which is a *good* thing as it stands, were crowding the churchyard, and making for the church.

The Dean and Aunt Eleanor were married first. Then came Roland and Ethel. Lastly, Sir Jasper and Mary Maynard. And if any bride ever looked happy, it was Mary Maynard. The only unhappy time she has had since she was married, was when she lost her first boy, but she has another now.

Then they all went into the vestry to sign the register, and Aunt Eleanor, leaving the Dean, took possession of Roland and Eddy, and bade them follow her. "Not you, Jim," she said, as he prepared to come with them. And she took Roland and Eddy to a quiet place on the north side of the church, and showed them a well-executed brass, let in the wall, on which was written :—

In Memory of

ALLAN EVANS,

Eldest son of the late Captain Charles Evans, of this parish

No man knows his grave, but one may believe that, being a soldier in Christ's Army from his youth, He rests with Christ's soldiers.

All his life long he fought for Christ's poor,

All his life long he wrestled with God in prayer, and in the end,

He gave his own life, for a life he believed to be

More precious than his own.

CONCLUSION.

Now the registers were signed, and they began coming out. Edwardes, of Moultan, came first, and was received by the crowd in the churchyard with a murmur of familiar welcome. For he was a feather in their caps, and they loved him. To think that he is dead!

Then came Squire Mordaunt and his son Jim, with young Somes. They were instantly mobbed. Every one wanted, on a sudden, as it seemed, to shake hands with these three. The squire was resplendent and glorious, and shook as many hands as he could get hold of, but kept saying "Room for the couples, men; room for the couples!" And so they got through.

Then came Roland and Ethel. So wonderfully splendid in their beauty that the spectators down the churchyard kept a dead silence. It had pleased Roland to be married in his full dress uniform, and he was resplendent in scarlet and gold. Ethel had on the same arrangement of rich lace which I saw on a great banker's lady the other day, arranged somehow in her hair, and falling down all over her. The people were simply dumb with admiration.

Next came the Dean and Aunt Eleanor. They were certainly an old couple, but a very fine one, though the Dean was not handsome,

and wore an innocent wig, without any concealment about it. There was a perfect roar of welcome for Aunt Eleanor. "God give you long days in the land, Madame Eleanor!" cried one. "God do to you, as you have done to us!" cried another. "You have the best wife in all England, sir," said another. And the Dean replied that he agreed with him entirely, and had known it all his life.

There came next Sir Jasper Meredith and Mary Maynard. Sir Jasper walked very well, and Mary looked very happy, the good Shropshire folks cheering them very heartily.

Before the last group came out of the church, Major Edwardes and young Somes, known to every one, had been about among the crowd, and explained to them who was coming. Jasper Meredith and his wife were easily passed over. All eyes were turned to the church, to the most interesting group of the day.

First, Eddy and Jim, in full uniform, like Roland, side by side; there was no cheering now. The people wanted to get near them and see them closer, and at that moment, had such a thing been necessary, Jim and Eddy could have raised a battalion out of that churchyard. But they held up their hands for silence. The valley was mad about the Mordaunt hero and the Evans hero, but their curiosity overpowered their love, and they let their two heroes pass nearly in silence.

After them came a French lady, most beautifully dressed, on the arm of Maynard, explaining matters to him in a very voluble manner. But they only said "Go it, young Maynard," and let them pass on; for they noticed that Major Edwardes had gone back, that young Somes was standing in the centre of the path; that Jim and Eddy were waiting by the Lychgate, and they knew that the man of the day was to come.

He came out of the church with Major Edwardes. A tall, handsome gentleman, with a face a little browner than even Evans' and Mordaunt's, who had just passed by. A gentleman, clothed in snow-white from head to foot, wearing a small turban. About his breast and shoulders he had developed innumerable diamonds—diamonds worth enough to pay for a province, which made them shade their eyes as they flashed in the sun. It was the Nawab of Belpore.

He was instantly stopped. Young Somes was terrified about his diamonds, as a lawyer should be; but not a soul in that Shropshire churchyard that morning would have touched one of them had it lay at his feet. Edwardes, Somes, Eddy, and Jim kept the crowd away from him. And Major Edwardes said—

"Gentlemen, this is the Nawab of Belpore. Faithful to us in prosperity, faithful to us in adversity, faithful to us in despair. When we believed that all was lost, he was true. Look on a true, loyal Indian gentleman for once. He goes away to work at the greatest work ever undertaken by any nation yet, to carry out among the one hundred and eighty millions of India this new civilization, originated by the revolutionary wars epitomized by us. There is a work before us in India more vastly important than the work of Hun or Mogul. The Nawab will help us. Now let us go."

So ended the pageant, and so ends my seventh story. My boys were very dear to me, but they are passed into Shadow-land for ever: the two Mordaunts, the two Evanses, and Maynard. Of all the ghosts of old friends which I have called up in this quaint trade, called the writing of fiction, only two remain with me, and never quit me. The others come and go, and I love them well enough; but the two who are with me always are the peaked-faced man Charles Ravenshoe and the lame French girl Mathilde.

A LOST NAME.

A Novel.

By J. SHERIDAN LE FANU,

AUTHOR OF "UNCLE SILAS," "GUY DEVERELL," "ALL IN THE DARK," "THE TENANTS OF MALORY," ETC., ETC.

NEW YORK:
HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,
FRANKLIN SQUARE.
1868.

A LOST NAME.

CHAPTER I.

MARK SHADWELL OF RABY.

RABY HALL stands near the old London road, in an inland county. You see but the great door and a portion of its front as you look up the broad straight avenue, with its double row of gigantic old beech-trees at either side. Its brick is red and mellow; black beams of oak, well jointed, and with carved inscriptions, bar the old walls across, and broad windows, with more small square panes than I dare number at a venture, return the sunlight when it nears the horizon like a thousand wintry fires.

The ground slopes downward from the front of the house, clumped with grand old trees, and rises in the rear, so forming those unequal and wooded uplands which overhang the old road with a distant and sombre outline for several miles.

The ancient park wall flanks a long stretch of the road, and, leaving it, slopes upward and loses itself among the distant woods. In this wall, upon the high road, are set the four great piers of the grand entrance, surmounted by the demi-griffins, with wings elevated (carved, in a style of true heraldic audacity, in red stone), which the Shadwells of Raby have long borne as their crest.

The old house and place, as you pass by, strike you as being handsome and interesting, but a little *triste* also. There is something more than an air of quietude about them. It does not amount to decay, but over it all broods the melancholy of neglect.

It was sunset when Mark Shadwell's steps echoed across the solitude of the paved stable-yard. The master of Raby had killed some weary hours and a few rabbits among the distant woods. His weather-beaten velveteen frock, his gaiters and wide-awake, would have been discarded by many a dandy game-keeper, but the bearing of the slight tall figure, and the pride and refinement of his still handsome features, were worthy of the old name he bore.

"Hallo there! any one! take these away to the cook," he called, as a boy emerged from the stable—"Here, you! and, have the letters come? That will do—don't know;" and Mark Shadwell, having thrown him his bag, with a sour look, and without a word more, strode from the yard, and so, thinking uncomfortably, with a knit brow and downcast look, to the hall door.

It was the sight of those winged demi-griffins, which are repeated in Caen stone, surmounting the low pedestals at the end of the balustrade at either side of the steps, that recalled him.

He raised his eyes, and came to a halt, and looked with a sour smile from one to the other. He scoffed at his heraldry now and then.

"Thank you, very fine fellows! A pair of vaporing rascals! Thank you both. It is very agreeable, I'm sure, to be received by two such distinguished personages at one's door-steps every day, upon my life—*very!* What terrible fellows you are! I don't know, however, that between you you'd keep out a bailiff or a dun, by Jove! A good washing, too, would do you no harm. For such very fine gentlemen, don't you think you are rather dirty?"

All this time Mr. Shadwell of Raby, with his foot on the door-step, was choosing a cigar—not with the countenance of a man about to enjoy a comfort, but with the sharp and peevish look of a sick man selecting his anodyne. His was a style of face that accorded with the gloom of a proud and vindictive spirit. Dark as a gipsy's was his complexion; dark brown sullen eyes, with finely-traced eyebrows, the whites of which showed a little fiercely against the tint of his complexion, added to this gloom and beauty. His mouth, small and finely-shaped, showed likewise, in contrast with his dark tint, a very white and even set of teeth. These points of beauty made his smile of irony or anger, I think, more painful by reason of a latent discord.

When he had lighted a cigar, he strolled slowly to the farther angle of the house, flanked by a projecting turret, a window on the second story of which stood open.

"Hallo! Sherlock, are you there? Carmel, I say! Carmel Sherlock!"

He stood expecting, with his cigar between his fingers, and in a moment there appeared at the open window a pallid man, not young, with lank black hair and large dark eyes, who placed his thin hand on the window-stone, and looked down with the distracted and dreamy air of a man called away from a task which still occupies his brain.

"Yes, sir, *here*," he answered.

"Come down for a few minutes, can you?" asked Mark Shadwell.

The pale face looked down, rather dreamily, and then away over the distant landscape, and Carmel Sherlock put his hand to his temple, thinking, and answered nothing.

"I say! d'ye hear? *Will* you come down?" repeated Shadwell.

"Down? yes, sir! oh yes! certainly."

And Carmel Sherlock stood erect, and, passing his fingers through his long lank hair, he turned slowly from the window. With a little shrug and one of his dreary smiles, Mark Shadwell thought, "That fellow's growing madder every

day, d— him! *He'll* go next, I suppose, just because he's of some little use—of *course!*"

Mark Shadwell walked back, smoking, with his eyes on the gravel, and one hand in his pocket, slowly and rather circuitously, to the door-steps, and seating himself on the balustrade, he smoked on with a bitter countenance, till Carmel Sherlock appeared.

"Well, did you look into that?" he asked, uncomfortably.

"What? which, sir?"

"The—the—that thing of Roke Wycherly's—the mortgage," he answered.

"Oh yes! I've settled that."

"I wish you had—it's something—a great deal, I dare say, by this time—" and he paused anxiously, looking hard at his companion.

"Twenty-two thousand three hundred and twelve pounds," replied Carmel Sherlock, "besides silver."

"Ah—I see!" said Shadwell, growing pale, and throwing away his cigar, though it was only half smoked—"I see. Come along."

And he walked a little way under the beech-trees, the tops of which still caught the ruddy sunlight, toward the great entrance.

"But how, I say—how the devil *could* it have run up to any thing like that in so short a time?"

"I wish it wasn't; but figures, you see, there's no avoiding them: they close in like fate," said Sherlock, with a sigh. "They're odd things, figures, they'll never knock under—they're omnipotent—you can't squeeze 'em—they'll break your head or your heart—but they won't swerve." Carmel Sherlock rubbed his hands slowly together, and smiled oddly along the grass, as he said this, perhaps only in admiration of the little people, as he often called these self-same figures.

"It's nothing to laugh at, d— you—what's there to laugh at? Suppose I'm ruined!" said Shadwell, savagely.

"Laugh! did I? I'm sorry, sir; I didn't mean—laugh, indeed! *I* don't laugh, never; I *never* laugh, sir; and I *am* sorry, I *tell* you, sir, I am."

"Well, you *ought* to be, I think, at all events. If I'm smashed, I don't see exactly what's to become of you—*I* don't, do *you?*"

"Ruin, I *do* see—*ruin*—*I* should be ruined, if you were smashed. I'd break my heart, sir, upon my honor;" so said Carmel Sherlock very earnestly, and stopping short in his promenade. "I should utterly break my heart, sir, unless—unless I could be of use;" and, having thus spoken, he heaved a sigh, so deep it was nearly a groan.

Mr. Shadwell looked at him. "You're a very odd fellow," he said. "You wouldn't be half so odd if you ate and drank like other people instead of living on tea and tobacco. How old are you, Carmel?"

Carmel Sherlock looked dismally on the ground, and, instead of answering, kicked a bit of rotten wood that lay in his way before him.

"How old are you?" repeated Shadwell.

"Too old to marry, if that's what you mean—too old, sir—too old to think of it." And he pulled off his felt hat, and beat it slowly on the side of his leg as he walked on; and looking up toward the sky, he shook back his long lank locks. "I'm very well here—I dont want much—I'm very well."

"Very well—of course you are. While I can fight the battle, you shan't want—you shan't indeed, Carmel."

Mr. Shadwell looked rather kindly as he laid his hand on Sherlock's thin arm: and that *distrait* companion said in a low tone, looking straight before him—

"He's very kind—very kind—he's half ruined. He ought to sell."

"Selling is out of the question," said Shadwell, sharply.

"Selling?" echoed Sherlock. "I was just thinking you might—it was in my head, sir, when you spoke—exactly."

"I told you before, I can't sell; you don't understand land; it's only a life-estate, except that seven hundred a year that Roke Wycherly has three times over, d—me; and if it really is twenty-two thousand pounds, I can't pay it, nor get it, by heaven!"

"Sir Roke Wycherly, Baronet—I know—of Scarbroke. Twenty-two thousand three hundred and twelve pounds—and some shillings—not worth mentioning. I shall have all the balances finished to-morrow—all that's due; life's such a dream, sir."

"I wish it were: dreams, indeed! my neck's broke trying to pay interest and charges and every thing—curse it! Better for a fellow to be dead, and out of it all!"

They had turned off the avenue into a wooded hollow. The sun had now set: there was still a red and golden glow in the sky, but the long shadows had spread into twilight, and the air was chilled.

CHAPTER II.

IT GROWS DARK.

"ROKE WYCHERLY, a nasty dog! the nastiest dog in England. I always thought him an odious fellow. He has let that money run up for a purpose, I know he has, by—! He has never had a thing to trouble him—the beast! And look at me! why, another fellow would put a pistol in his mouth and blow his head off!" This was spoken with a bitter oath.

"That's it, there!" muttered Sherlock; "you mustn't. Oh no, no! It's a *mistake;* there's neither heaven nor hell—not a bit—it's—it's like a bubble gone out; the same thin shell of water and the same little puff of air will never meet again. Body and soul—body and soul—better together! Oh yes! I've thought about that."

"Thank you," said sour Mark Shadwell.

"Dreamed!—ay, I dreamt about him two or three times lately; stiff in the corner, with a star of blood."

"Who?" said Shadwell.

"Eh?" answered Carmel.

"Your head's full of green tea and tobacco; of course you're always dreaming—it's the way fellows make themselves mad, by Jove!" said Shadwell, turning toward home.

"Mad! well—ha! that isn't likely to come, sir, to a quiet man like me, with plenty of work, and no great care—except *one*—except one," answered Carmel Sherlock, softly.

"Pooh! not mad; we're all mad, for that matter; I mean you fast and watch like a monk or a nun, and you live on tea and smoke, and

you've put yourself in training to see visions; you've gone in for that sort of thing."

"Here they are, sir; I'll go," whispered Sherlock, with a quick side glance, at the same time drawing away from Mr. Shadwell's side.

"Who?"

"The two ladies—here, sir, here—*there!*" so said Sherlock, pointing with his finger stealthily across his breast.

They were not goblins; very much the reverse. Two young girls; in this twilight you could see but their slender outlines. There was a sneer on Shadwell's features as he saw them. The sneer perhaps was for Sherlock. It did not brighten to a smile, however, as the young ladies, chatting musically, approached. His face grew gloomy and forbidding, on the contrary, and he looked as if he wished them fifty miles away.

These young ladies—Rachel Shadwell and Miss Agnes Marlyn—were talking as they drew near, and suddenly were silent on seeing Mr. Shadwell, and as they approached the point at which their path crossed his, they slackened their pace timidly, almost to a stand-still, like people approaching a door within which they know is a dangerous dog.

"You shouldn't be out so late—damp and cold. Get on—get on—get home, will you?" snarled Mark Shadwell at his pretty daughter, and, with a make-belief of lifting his hat to Miss Marlyn, he waved them on toward the house.

Sherlock sighed profoundly, and he and his patron slowly followed in the steps of the young ladies, who viewed with so much awe the man of acres and of debts, of whose moods they knew something.

Whenever the practical psychology of love becomes a subject of scientific inquiry—as barren metaphysics now are—and learned professors are told off to note, lecture, and, if they will, experiment on its unexplored wonders and universal powers, it will come out that MYSTERY is at the bottom of it all. Nature teaches all manner of beautiful duplicities to girls—sinuous and subtle as the emblem of wisdom. It is strangely sweet, I think, to see a pretty girl, with downcast lashes and listening smile, communing enigmatically with her thoughts. With a slender wand she leads away the giant to her dungeon; man's imagination is her subject, and her wand is mystery. Wonderful girlish nature, in which the false and the true, the beautiful and the deadly, are always contending! The spell of thy power is mystery; we follow a voice in the air; a beautiful apparition that speaks not; the slaves of the unrevealed; and so we are thine till the hour comes of thy broken talisman and subjugation. The serpent, the serpent! The poison and the healing; the guile and yet the wisdom; the cruelty, sometimes, and the fascination! And when in the midst of this cold, proud, anguine empire comes "the charmer," though his pipe please not me, all is in an hour changed and disarmed by his ungainly music; there is a gliding to his feet, a gazing, a winding about his arms, and the creature is poisonless, docile, captive.

"I did not think your news would be so bad as that," said Shadwell, abruptly.

"I did not know, sir," said Sherlock.

"It *is* bad, I can tell you, and *very* bad. Now, the next thing he'll do, he'll begin with an attorney. I know what he's about; he knows I understand him, and by this time he's chuckling over it. Now just think—the whole thing—the scoundrel!"

Carmel raised his lean pale face toward the stars that were beginning to blink in the deepening blue.

"You're not an astrologer?" sneered Shadwell.

"Astrologer? no. Oh dear! certainly no—only what you call a fatalist," said Carmel, still looking up.

"A Mahomedan?"

Carmel sighed very deeply, as he said—

"I wish I were."

"The paradise, perhaps," scoffed Shadwell, angrily; for Sherlock's occasional inattention to his complaints, and even to his blasphemies, exasperated him. Other vices are indulgent to their like when repeated in others. But with egotism it is different. No one is so hard on the selfishness of another as a selfish man.

A quick shrinking glance Carmel shot on his companion. "Eh! eh!" he said, and then drew a long breath, and walked on in silence by his side, looking up at the stars as before. "He doesn't mean it—he *didn't*—he doesn't," he murmured. "Mahomedans are too nearly Christians for me—nearer than the Church of Rome, I think."

Shadwell laughed a short laugh under his breath; a bad and joyless laugh, it seemed.

"A fatalist—yes, yes—that I am—a fatalist, as you say," said Carmel, answering nobody.

"I'm with you so far. We'll not quarrel on religion, I think."

"Yes; it's quite plain. I'll show you the principle any day, sir, you choose to come to my room—I haven't time to finish it now—with algebraic proof, the exact sciences. A creed should rest on numbers, you know, not on imagination; fancy is the decorative faculty, but number is demonstration—and demonstration is fact—the whole thing is necessity. According to the *doctrine* of Chance, there is *no* chance. The whole of the stars up there; it's all *coercion*, and yet it's all chance, don't you see? Chance is only limited rotation, you know; and the combinations of rotation itself are limited—and—and—don't you see?—it ends in coercion."

Carmel had come to a stand-still, and, with his white countenance smiling upward on the stars, and his hand on his patron's arm, was gabbling now with extreme volubility.

"Ay, ay, I dare say! capital algebra, capital science, I'm quite sure," answered Shadwell. "I don't trouble *my* head about that; *my* creed is, dust to dust—so there's an end of it. Come along."

"I suppose there's *some* way out of it," resumed Shadwell, on a sudden. He was thinking of his money troubles, not of his creed; after an interval, "Without a bullet this time—but what's a fellow's life worth? Look at that bat flitting there—zigzag—free as air—lots of flies—snug nest—every thing—nothing to trouble him. Lords of the creation, indeed—such rot!"

Carmel's large eyes followed the wavering flight of the bat; and he murmured, "Oh! that I had wings—"

"Like a *bat?*" said Shadwell.

"Good poetry, sir, here and there, in the psalms," continued his companion. "Oh! that

I had wings like a dove," he repeated with a strange sigh and a smile.

"Or a demi-griffin—hang them!" said the master of Raby, again snarling at the mystic brutes that seemed to mock him, with an elaborate burlesque, whenever ruin came as near as it stood at present. They were by this time at the hall-door, and, pushing it open, Shadwell paused and said—

"And, I say, you've done enough to-day. You must come down, you *must*, this evening, and read some Italian, or whatever it is; do you mind? They'll be very glad to see you."

"Shall I?" murmured Carmel, looking to the sky with a doubtful smile and one hand raised.

"Of *course* you shall; don't I tell you you must? You're tired; *mind* you come," he added with a nod, as he left him, and crossed the hall, thinking of something else; while Sherlock, with his peculiar pallid smile, stood at the foot of the stair, with the tips of his fingers to his lips, looking after him.

CHAPTER III.

THE BARONET SPEAKS.

"Oh! shall I?" repeated Carmel, with the same rapt smile and sigh, standing like a beatified spirit at the gate of Paradise, with its light upon his face.

But as with sudden pain his features contracted and darkened. "Tut, tut, tut, Carmel! whither so fast? Not bad enough, eh? ha! ha! why, I'm all *burnt*—burnt. Scrivener, fiddler, fool! No, no; up to my crib, and draw forth my pitying angel, and scrape her into screams and sobs of consolation." And with this idea, evidently tickled, he laughed oddly to himself, running up the stairs three at a time.

The gallery was dark, and only the dim sky of a moonless night faintly defined the outline of his open window as he entered his room. He was groping for a match; but desisted.

"No," he thought; "this is better—beautiful mezzotint, on which my eyes will paint images! while, let me see, let me see—*can* I find it? ay, here thou art! while thou dost wail and quiver in the dark—my spirit!" And, at the same time, he swept his bow across the strings of the violin which he had found, and in low, wild, tremulous notes, and standing with his shoulder against the window-case, and gazing out upon the blank, he made a dirge-like and wandering voluntary, which proceeded unbroken, though he sometimes sighed, and sometimes talked to himself, and sometimes laughed a little.

In the mean time, as Mark Shadwell approached the door to which he was walking dejectedly, his eye was suddenly caught by the post-bag on the oak table in the hall.

The letters! the hated letters, They never had a pleasant tale to tell. He emptied the bag on the table, and with a shock that suspended his breath, he saw at a glance a large square envelope, addressed in the hand of Sir Roke Wycherly.

Five years had passed since he saw that hand before—five years of mutability and death—through which they two had come alive, reserved for the events that were coming.

"R. Wycherly" at the left-hand corner of the envelope identified the writer. But Shadwell needed not the proof. Love has its instinct of recognition, but fear a still subtler one. Shadwell feared this baronet, who was his remote cousin, his creditor, and who had, moreover, a fancied claim to a portion of that estate, every acre of which was needed to keep him from ruin.

Mark Shadwell's features grew paler as this envelope looked him in the face. A crisis of some sort was coming. Roke Wycherly would not have taken up his pen to write to a man whom he despised—as he did every unsuccessful man—whom he had always rather disliked, and who, he knew, hated him—without some special business on hand. "He is going to demand his arrears of interest, and to open an attack upon my title, and perhaps to hint at a compromise. A compromise! what compromise could there be which would not ruin Shadwell?" All the time that he was thus trifling with his own suspense, he would have taken another man by the throat for retaining his secret. He looked at the large red seal, and back again at the front of the address. The letters were thick, and the lines ran up at one end with an ominous scowling squint.

"That letter means mischief," he thought, and thrust it unopened into the bottom of his pocket, pinched hard between his finger and thumb, and he stood irresolute: he was thinking of reading it elsewhere, but he could wait no longer; and, glancing over his shoulder and around, like a man on the verge of a crime, he broke the seal and read Roke Wycherly's letter. It ran thus:

"Dear Mark:—Look on to the foot of this note, and then say, can you believe your eyes? Yet it is I, indeed! I wish to see you, and am myself so much abroad, so little, therefore, likely to meet you in town, or elsewhere in England, *casually*, that I must ask you to permit me to make a *certainty* of it by looking in upon you at Raby. May I? I shall be running northward, in two or three days, to Scarbrook. My wish would be to pull up at your door as I pass. It is very impertinent, I know, to say so, particularly to ask admission at so short a notice, when fifty things may make it inconvenient or impracticable. See how I approach you! Pray stand on no ceremony with me. If you can't see me this time, I shall know you *really* can't. If you *can*, can you manage also a corner for my man? I have been a little of an invalid—though, understand, not a troublesome one—for now upward of a year. Drop me a line to this place, and pray remember me particularly to my kinswoman, Amy, and my best respects to my other kinswoman, your daughter, whose acquaintance I hope to make. Again, pray requite me as little ceremony as I use, and believe me, dear Mark, yours, ever, Roke Wycherly."

"——'s Hotel, London."

Shadwell's hungry eye devoured all this with a rapid glance. He read it again. "There is absolutely nothing in it, but that he wants to come here. Does he? It's not for my good, then, that's clear; what *can* it be for? To see the place, to sneak, and pick up information about the property? It isn't that—no, it isn't

that—what could he ask? what could he learn? No! it isn't,"

Shadwell had read this letter with his broad felt hat overshadowing his still handsome face. It engaged him so thoroughly that he forgot the other letters lying on the table, and, crossing the hall in deep thought, or rather abstraction, he walked out into the darkness and solitude to ruminate undisturbed, for this enigma troubled him.

As he loitered with downcast looks under the broad front of the old house, he was startled from his reverie by the ugly wailings of Carmel's fiddle from the turret-window.

"That's *you*, Sherlock! Hollo! Stop your caterwauling, will you? Well, do you hear me?"

"I do," said the gentle voice of Carmel, from above.

"Well, he's coming; I'm going to write for him. He'll be here in a day or two; I'll write to ask him—and—I don't know what it's for," he added, a little inconsistently.

"Sir Roke Wycherly—aha—I thought," said the oracle from above.

"Ay, Roke Wycherly, who else?" echoed Shadwell.

"Oh no! Oh dear, no! True—no one—ah! ha-ha!" said Carmel, with something between a shudder and a laugh. "Ho dear! can't you keep him off?"

"Keep him off! why the devil should I? I'm not afraid of him, I suppose," said Shadwell, fiercely.

"Oh no! oh no! of course; but *I* am; *I'm* afraid. I wish, sir, you could keep him off, you know."

"Why, it's *I* who am bringing him here! Keep him off? D—n him!" snarled Shadwell's voice, defiantly.

"Bringing him? Oh yes! Bringing him here—yes, sir. I'm *afraid*. It's a very dark night. It's his shadow. I wish I could keep him off—tut, tut!—is not there plague enough?"

And speaking these words, I suppose in a reverie, he drew his bow across the strings again, and produced a new discord.

"*Will* you stop that d—d noise?" cried Shadwell, sternly. "Not that you would not make a very pretty Antigone," he added, changing his tone to a sneer. "Light your candle, will you? I'm going up: and get out the paper about that cursed mortgage, *do*, and I'll just look at it, as far as you've got."

"Pardon—pardon—I wasn't thinking; light, to be sure, sir! I beg your pardon—light, to be sure, sir. It *is* dark—*awfully* dark! If I were a fanciful man, I'd say this violin made it darker, and the news darkest of all. Wings, wings, sir, and moral shadows!"

Shadwell, you may be sure, did not wait to hear these sage reflections out, and, as he ascended the door-steps, the glimmer of a match from Carmel Sherlock's window showed that he was lighting his candle.

CHAPTER IV.

MARK SHADWELL'S ANSWER.

So Mark Shadwell mounted the stairs of Raby Hall in the dark, and at the end of the lonely gallery entered the turret room, where Carmel Sherlock awaited him standing, with a solitary candle lighted.

"By Jove!" murmured the master of Raby with his accustomed sneer, when he stepped in and looked round him. He always forgot when he had been a few weeks without visiting it how odd the little room was—a segment of the wall circular, the rest polyhedric and crooked. "What a perverse little closet!" one would have exclaimed. And stranger still were the furniture and decorations. Near the window stood a high, slender lock-up desk, on four slim legs, and with shelves beneath laden with a litter of papers and ledgers. Carmel kept the accounts of the estate, and many cross accounts, and scores of interest, and other complicated debit and credit entries, and did his work standing before the tall desk. Over the tiny fire-place hung an ancient steel cross-bow and four tobacco pipes of various fashions, long and short, an unframed small Madonna, antique and precious, picked up in an old lumber-room of an out-of-the-way London tavern, for such a trifle as he could afford, and which he almost adored, in which he saw resemblances, and recognized, he fancied, a master-hand. There were shelves of books, too, not half a dozen modern ones among them, and those of that "philosophic" school which bears no amity to revelation. Coverless folios, yellow vellum-backed quartos, and some diminutive black letter and others, dark and warped by time, and looking like great burnt squares of gingerbread. Against the wall, too, hung his beloved fiddle, and a variety of other queer decorations, so that one could understand Shadwell's reflection, "It's like nothing but a corner of a madman's brain."

"Light that other candle, will you? and give me all the light you can, and let me have a sheet of paper, and—ay, there are pens and ink."

At the desk Shadwell wrote standing—

"Dear Roke,—Your friendly note charms me. I shall expect you. Any day you like best will equally answer us. We can't make you as comfortable as we could wish; but roughing it in a poor man's country house you will make excuse. I write so briefly lest I should lose a post. We have some pretty good trout-fishing here. Our shooting decidedly bad—unless you care for killing rabbits. On the whole, I can't deny the place is rather slow; but you'll forgive it and believe me, ever yours sincerely,

"M. Shadwell."

"P.S. What you say of your health distresses me. But, boasting little else, the air of Raby at least is excellent, and really does wonders for some people."

"Oh! d—n the fiddle!" exclaimed Shadwell, interrupted by the renewed minstrelsy of Carmel, who, startled with bow suspended in his fingers, gazed with a pained alarm on his patron.

"Fiddle—fiddle! *he* said *fiddle!*" murmured Carmel, in sad and gentle accents; for it was a foible of his to fancy every thing he possessed a *chef-d'œuvre* or a miracle.

"So he *did*," repeated Shadwell, with a sharp nod.

"A—*yes*; but this is—a—*yes*, do but look at it—this is a Straduarius. I was lucky, sir—amaz-

ing—ha! yes. I paid only twenty-four shillings for it!"

Shadwell sealed his envelope, and offered no comment.

"And it is worth three hundred guineas, sir," continued he, almost whispering the estimate to his beloved violin.

"I wish you'd sell it," said Shadwell, dryly, for he hated its music; "and if you can get half what you gave, I advise you. Come, let me see what you have done."

"Sell it? So I will—ay, sir, when its turn of servitude is done. I shan't want it after a few weeks. There is a secret about those violins—Prometheus; the Statue of Memnon. If the history of Saul and David be as true as that of George the Third, there was a Straduarius who made harps then—harps. Spirit is vibration, and vibration is music. I have thought upon that, sir. I can explain—"

"Thank you, I'd rather have the balance of the mortgage account," replied Shadwell.

"Oh!—ah!—to be sure, sir, I beg pardon—not quite made out, though. Roke Wycherly—Sir Roke. *Coming*! Tut! tut! tut! Ay—well, yes—such dreams! And potential letters, too. Would you like the window shut, sir?"

As he spoke he was selecting and getting together the notes required by Mark Shadwell.

"My father died of fever at Easterbroke; my poor mother at Rochester, her heart, and my dear sister at Wyden—all great losses—dreadful, sir, dreadful—one at Christmas, that's yule—the next on Easter Monday, and the last on the Royal Oak Day, we used to call it—the anniversary, you know, and the villain who robbed me was Robert Eyre Yardley. Where I was knocked down by the cab, and my rib broken, was Regent Street, and there are no end—no end of them. So I have reason to hate those letters E, Y, and R; and they are doubled in his name, and the rest—ay, here's the account deducted—Sandford's—and the rest are, O, K, W, C, H, L—and they are *your* unlucky letters, sir. I'll show you."

"Much obliged—some other time," said Shadwell, dryly, taking the papers. "Will you tell Jack Linton to run down to the town and post this letter?"

"Ha! this is it—ay, ay—my God! won't you *think*, sir?" said Carmel, throwing back his long black hair, and fixing his eyes with a stare of pain and fear on Shadwell.

"We'll post the letter, and think after," said he.

"R—Rachel, that's another—the worst, perhaps," whispered Carmel, clasping his hands as he left the room dejectedly.

"That fellow's cracked—he *is* mad," muttered Shadwell, looking after him. If he had been in better spirits he would have laughed; as it was he contented himself with a hope that Carmel's figures were right. And Carmel, much troubled, re-entered the room.

He passed his hand through his hair, and groaned as he came behind Mark Shadwell's chair softly, and laid his hand on the back of it, saying—

"I think, sir, if you knew all—such dreams! He came into my room at dead of night, like a great cock—ha, ha! you will laugh, you will—with a bloody comb—head, eyes, neck, all bloody, sir, taller than the door, and crowed. I knew it was he—such a crow, it pierced my brains, sir. I knew it was he, though I never saw him."

"He's not a bit like a cock, though—a cockcomb, perhaps. So *do* shut up your poultry, and help me to understand this."

While Mark Shadwell in Carmel's room was busy over these accounts, in the drawing-room sat quite alone a very pretty woman—though no longer young, still girlish—with the transparent and delicate tints of an invalid in her oval face, large eyes and long lashes, and such a pretty mouth! Though the face was very sad just now, you could not help feeling how brightly it might smile. Pensively she lay back in her low-armed chair; her thin pretty hands lay extended beside her, and her head a little on one side, with that peculiar dejection which strikes us so plaintively in pictures of mediæval martyrs. Her hair, brown and wavy, was seen under that pretty little lace coiffure, with a dark-blue ribbon running through it, which reminded one of the old mob cap.

Pearly-tinted, slender, pensive, there was yet in that fragile creature an air of youth quite wonderful in the mother of a girl now just eighteen.

This girlish, fragile, pretty matron was Mark Shadwell's wife—the still young mother of that pretty Rachel, their only child. Well might she be sad, thinking of the hope and love she had given in vain. It was one of those mysterious passions exacted by fate, never to be requited. Nineteen years ago, just two-and-thirty, in the prime of manly beauty, he seemed to her in all things a hero, His love was a beautiful but false adoration—so eloquent, so passionate, so graceful. Where was it now? Long burnt out, cold ashes, years ago—gone before their first child was born. What so terrible as this fatal fidelity of a neglected love? Wrongs will not murder it, nor desertion starve it. Wildly it prays to be changed to loathing—entreats that it may die, and curses itself for loving still.

As Amy Shadwell leaned back in her chair, her look was lowered to the ground beyond her tiny feet, and on her face that strange look of pain along with that light or smile, I know not which it is, that we have seen so often on the faces of the youthful dead.

Her thoughts were now wandering to Rachel and her governess.

"My darling, it is well for her—a gentle and loving person—affectionate and playful—Agnes Marlyn. She would be good to her if I were gone. She loves me, I hope. But this *triste* place! Will she stay—will she stay long?"

Just now the door silently opened, and Agnes Marlyn, like an evoked spirit, stood on the threshold with some flowers in her hand, doubtfully, and it seemed as if from within that old oak door-case, as from a stained window, a flood of wonderfully rich tints entered the room.

Pretty Mrs. Shadwell looked up and smiled.

"Come, dear—come, you dear kind Agnes; and flowers, too! You always think of me, you good creature!"

Agnes heard this greeting with a beautiful dimpling smile, standing under the shadow of the door-way, and, it seemed, with a blush of gratification, and her long lashes were lowered over those dark, soft, clouded eyes, so impossible

to describe. And closing the door, with the ends of her fingers, she approached the table with her flowers, gently.

CHAPTER V.

AGNES MARLYN.

"PRETTY flowers! Ah yes! and *so* sweet!" said Amy Shadwell, with a smile. "Charming! a thousand thanks, kind creature!" and she touched Agnes Marlyn's pretty hand caressingly as she placed them in the little glass that stood beside her.

Agnes answered only with the same smile, looking all the time down upon the flowers which she was adjusting.

"And where have you and Rachel been? Weren't you late?" asked pale Mrs. Shadwell, but with her gentle smile.

"Late? oh! very late, Mrs. Shadwell. I am so sorry. My watch, I think, went quite wrong. I was so afraid you would have been anxious and vexed, only you are so good. We were at Hazelden, so far away in the park, and the sun was nearly setting when we came to that pretty ruin, Wynderfel—is not that the name? and so we came so fast—so fast—and were late notwithstanding; and I am *so* sorry."

Miss Agnes Marlyn spoke in a particularly sweet low voice, with a slight foreign accent, and a little slowly; altogether the singularity was very pretty. But although she had passed many years of her life at a French school, which she had left only a few months ago to come to Raby, she seldom spoke a French idiom, and then I think it sounded interesting.

"And where is my other truant? You're not tired, I hope?" asked Mrs. Shadwell.

"Rachel? Oh! Rachel's in her room, coming immediately. I don't think she was; she said she wasn't tired," said Agnes.

"And you?"

"I?—oh! never tired of the beautiful country—never tired walking. To wander always among the trees, to feel the blowing air and the grass and flowers—so charming under the foot—is my paradise, I think," said Miss Agnes Marlyn, in her low sweet tones, looking with a happy flush as if she could see her beloved woodlands, flowers and dingles, through and beyond the oak panels.

"But I'm afraid you find it very dull, my poor Agnes—your pension, your companions, the pretty French town and gardens—"

"Ah, madame, never was I so happy! The lonely country to me is sweetest. I never have cared for noise and gayety. I have lost my father and my dear mamma early, when I was still a little girl, as you know. I never was anywhere so happy since then, because I never was with one so kind—never with any one I so much loved as you; but—pardon, madame—I am, I have been, too audacious—I have for a moment forgotten myself."

"Forgotten your foolish shyness—that's what *I* say," replied Mrs. Shadwell, smiling on the affectionate and grateful girl. "Yes, Agnes, you must trust in me more than you have done. I think you like me; I know I like you. I should like to make you another dear child of mine."

The beautiful girl rose up with a flush of subdued rapture, her arms extended in a glad surprise; and with a smile of welcome the pretty and fragile mistress of Raby also rose, and in the effusion of the moment, gently folded her young dependent in her arms.

Beautiful Agnes Marlyn! Lithe, tall, ineffably graceful! With a kind of sigh she gave herself to that embrace, and lay in it a second or so longer than she need, perhaps.

In fairy lore we read of wondrous transmutations and disguises. How evil spirits have come in the fairest and saddest forms; how fell and shrewd-eyed witches have waited in forest glades by night, in shapes of the loveliest nymphs. So, for a dream-like moment, one might see, under the wondrous beauty of the girl, in that spell of momentary joy, a face that was apathetic and wicked.

Amy Shadwell did not see it. As the girl drew gratefully back, with downcast look, there was nothing in that sensitive and splendid beauty but the light of a tremulous happiness.

"Oh! madame—Mrs. Shadwell—I can not say—how can I?—half what gratitude I feel for all your goodness. I hope I may please you, and do my duty by your dear child, as I pray I may. My fate has been so solitary, even among many companions; no one to care for me—no one ever to love me. Contempt follows poverty like its shadow: amidst seeming equality, I was despised; amidst a crowd, I was alone."

Miss Agnes Marlyn here hastily brushed her handkerchief to her beautiful eyes, and Mrs. Shadwell again spoke words of consolation; and again the young lady's gratitude was eloquent.

"Do I not hear the piano? I think Rachel is playing. Shall I go, madame? it is her hour for practicing."

So, kindly, Agnes Marlyn was dismissed.

As she passed through the hall, Agnes paused at the table where the letters lay, about a dozen, littered together, as Mark Shadwell left them. She glanced over her shoulder, and listened for a moment; many doors opened on the hall—and, all being still, she ran her finger-tips rapidly among them, and turned them over and about. There was one addressed to her, written in a constrained, it might be a disguised, hand. Quickly, with a handsome smile—a smile a little cruel—she hid it away in her breast. Again she glanced and listened, and then with a rapid eye examined the others. There was not another that interested her. And in a moment more she entered the room where Rachel was at the piano.

Ten minutes later Mark Shadwell passed the same table, and suddenly recollected the letters. There were two for his wife, one for Rachel, and—wasn't there?—there certainly *was* one addressed to Miss Agnes Marlyn, in a peculiar hand, and with the London postmark. Where was that letter? It had, somehow, a little interested Mark Shadwell; although that interest had been instantaneously suspended by the sight of Roke Wycherly's note.

Mark Shadwell now, in his turn, looked sharply round. *Who* had been meddling? Well—time enough. Meanwhile he would see his wife, and let her have hers.

He had been a man of fashion in his day, and, though the vase was broken, "the scent of the roses" hung round it still. There were handsome features, though the light of youth was gone, and a distinguished air; and poor little Mrs. Shadwell still believed that his beauty and fascinations were unrivaled.

He had been a man of fashion, and something more—a rake, a gamester, a prodigal. There were worse men, I dare say, but he was bad enough.

She smiled her timid welcome as he entered now. He did not choose to see it. Is any pleading sadder than an unanswered smile?

"Two letters," said he, dryly. "If they're half as pleasant as mine, they'll help to make your evening agreeable."

"One is from old Mrs. Danvers, and the other from my cousin, Sophy Mordaunt," said Amy, as she glanced on the envelopes.

"Oh, indeed! then no doubt they'll turn out quite as amusing as I expected. I've had a very charming one, also—and from a particularly charming person."

And having sneered thus far, in his dreary way, he paused, and said—"Guess who—there, you may as well give it up—you never could—it is your old admirer, and my old creditor, Roke Wycherly. He tells me he has been suffering—no doubt miserably, with twenty thousand a year, and all Europe, of every pleasure in which, poor devil, he avails himself in turn—suffering most cruelly—ha, ha!—and he's coming here; no doubt because we are so entertaining, and so fond of him—and the shooting so good—and he likes rabbits so much—and— Upon my life, if these aren't his reasons, I can't jump at any other—only I'm quite sure he means me no good, and I think he can do me a mischief, which he probably intends: and, therefore, we must make him as welcome and as comfortable as we can, and, no doubt, he'll pass a charming week. And pray tell the people to get his room ready; and his man is coming."

"How soon, dear, does he come?" she asked, with a rather dismal look.

"I suppose in a week, or a fortnight—perhaps the day after to-morrow; I dare say he does not know himself—whenever he likes, in fact—and that's *my* news."

And, with these words, he turned and left the room.

CHAPTER VI.

SOME MUSIC.

He walked into the room in which Rachel was playing, her governess sitting by her in the attitude of one reading the music over her shoulder, but with a look that passed through the page far away, and was dark and dreamy. Hearing the step, they both looked round.

"Pray, go on—I've come to listen. I don't interrupt, Miss Marlyn, I hope?"

"Oh, no, Mr. Shadwell, certainly not!" said Miss Agnes Marlyn, smiling and embarrassed, and in her low tones.

"I'm very glad. I like music and young people, and should be sorry to be turned out. Go on, Rachel."

So the music proceeded; and Mark Shadwell, throwing himself carelessly on the sofa, looked on Miss Marlyn with a secret interest. Though she seemed to be looking altogether on the music, and he could see but the upcurled edge of her long eyelash, she felt his gaze, and was secretly flattered, perhaps amused.

"That'll do, Rachel, for a moment," said he after a time. "The piano's very well, but, Miss Marlyn, don't you sing? I'm sure you do—I can't be mistaken—the formation of the throat—you need not look down, I assure you it's very beautiful; but I can't be mistaken. Do sing a little—solo, duet, any thing you like—pray do."

"Very happy, sir," said she, with a modest awe. "But I had only a very few lessons when I left La Perriere, and I—I hardly dare sing before *you*."

Sing, however, on a little encouragement, she did, very prettily, a little French song; and Mr. Shadwell applauded with both hands, and thanked her, and said—

"Quite a *charming* voice! I had no idea—or, rather, I *had* an idea, and a very correct one, as it turns out; but I never heard you sing a note before. How strange! such a voice! and yet, to say nothing of *us*, you can deny *yourself*, and live in silence! Candles under bushels—I've no patience with that cruel sort of modesty—cruel nightingale! And, by Jove, what a blessing music is! I don't mean, of course, that noisy, formal, heartless business, that young ladies sit down to at the piano, but *music*—be it art or nature—the thing that stirs our feelings. I do assure you, King Saul was never so much under the shadow of his demon as I was when I came in here; and David's harp was nothing to that song. I do assure you, quite seriously, I *am* very much obliged."

Now there really was some savor of truth in this—Mark Shadwell did feel more cheerful; but I don't know that it was all the music, or very much, although he liked dropping in there and listening.

"You came to us in April, wasn't it, Miss Marlyn?" he asked. "You've been our guest six months; and my wife says you'll be sure to grow tired of us before long. She hopes not, you know, and so do I; but I'm afraid it is a slow place—isn't it, *rather?*" and he laughed in his sardonic way once more.

"I told Mrs. Shadwell to-night, what is really true," said Miss Marlyn, gravely, "how much I like the quiet of this place, sir; I do, *indeed*."

"Well, I'm sure I'm very glad; it's more than I do," he replied peevishly.

"Oh, dear, that is nine o'clock!" exclaimed Agnes Marlyn, as the clock in the hall struck the hour, and glancing at her watch for confirmation. "Yes, indeed! Rachel, dear, we must go. Your mamma will expect us in her room; and the books are in the school-room. Good-night, Mr. Shadwell."

"Good-night—good-night," said he. "Oh, by the bye, I forgot—there's a letter—just one word—Rachel, you can run and get those books; don't be a minute." And Rachel, accustomed to obey, did as she was bid. "You know you *do* think this place nearly intolerable. It must be insufferably dull."

"I have told you the truth, sir," said Miss Marlyn, with just the least indication of being offended.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Mr. Shadwell, in an under-key.

"It is very well, sir, for the great or the wealthy to enjoy the world; but for such as I, what can it give? The same routine—the same solitude—and a thousand mortifications. If I did not like this place very dearly, I need not stay. I have told you the truth." And saying this, those clouded eyes of hers dropped to the carpet, and Mark Shadwell thought her color was a little heightened.

He looked on her for a moment with a sombre sort of puzzle.

"And," he said, resuming, "there was a letter addressed to you—it came by this evening's post; I laid it down in the hall with the rest, and, by Jove, I can't find it."

He was looking still very steadily at her as he said this.

"Oh, thanks!—I *took* it," said she, raising her eyes and looking full on him.

"Ho! I had no idea," he said, fibbing, with an air of innocent surprise. "I'm so glad it's safe."

"Yes, it was from a very kind old friend. As I came into the hall, it and two others were on the ground, and I picked them up, and saw one addressed to me; I hope it was not wrong, but I took it. I am very sorry—I ought to have asked first; but, indeed, Mr. Shadwell, I intended to have told you the moment I saw you, and most stupidly I forgot. I am *very* sorry; *pray* forgive me—won't you, sir?"

She was fibbing, too; but wasn't it pleasant to be asked, in such low and sweet tones, to forgive so very beautiful a creature?

"Oh! to be sure—no harm—none in the world. You were quite right, perfectly; I only wished to—to *tell* you; but it was your own, and I hope it may turn out pleasanter than mine do. When I was as young as you, I used to get some very pleasant letters indeed. You know quite well the sort of thing I mean—you all *do;* and I think you *are* a bit of a rogue—you all *are.*" He spoke in very low tones, and looking full upon her, and smiling, showed his set of small even teeth, that looked a little wicked, and seemed to like prolonging this little talk.

"I never tell a lie, Mr. Shadwell," said Miss Agnes Marlyn, with a proud humility, and downcast eyes.

"More than *I* can say; more than any other girl can say, that is not a literal saint. Are *you?* I hope not, I'm sure: they're so disagreeable and censorious; impossible to live in the house with them; but you must not be vexed, you know. We are good friends, Miss Marlyn, aren't we?"

And he laid his fingers on her arm, which hung by her side, and they glided down her wrist to her hand, which he took.

"You'll shake hands? — there now — we're friends, aren't we?"

There was something almost tender in this friendliness, and Miss Marlyn, raising her beautiful eyes with a look of timid wonder, which seemed preparing for one of recoil, withdrew her hand and said—

"There was no quarrel, I hope, sir. I hope I have said nothing of disrespect; I should be very sorry of it."

"No! nonsense; disrespect, indeed; what do you look so surprised at?" said he.

"I—I thought—you never spoke to me so much before at a time, Mr. Shadwell, and—I thought—we are all a little afraid, sir, of you; I thought you were proud, sir, and severe—and —pray do not be offended."

There was a kind of reproof in this, Shadwell thought; he looked gloomily in her face, without quite understanding her, and then he laughed.

"Proud and severe!" he repeated, reflectively, with an odd smile, like a man looking on his own miniature: "that's not so bad. Well, perhaps I am; yes, I *am* — where I am *crossed,* that is; ay, by Jove! proud and severe as the fiend himself. Come along, Rachel—what have you been about?" he called, raising his voice as he heard her step coming. "Good-night, child; good-night, Miss Marlyn," and he threw himself back on the sofa, with a gloomy countenance, and without a glance after either.

CHAPTER VII.

IN AMY SHADWELL'S ROOM.

When Rachel ran into her mamma's room to bid her good-night, she found her busy with old Dorothy Wyndle, the housekeeper. A guest of any importance at Raby was seldom heard of, and such an arrival produced a sensation. Here was a consultation as to where to place Sir Roke, which interested Rachel, whose curiosity was all alive.

"Hey! ma'am, it's thirty-one years since he was here; my blue-eyed beauty I called him then. He was a very pretty boy, golden hair, dearie me! and those blue eyes, and his pretty pink checks; nice slim little figure, a tidy-made little fellow. His poor mamma came here *that* time; a nice creature she was, and I hear he grew up very tall at college. Him and Master Mark here, they used to ride out on their little rough ponies to see the hounds at cover, like yesterday, and sometimes they'd quarrel a bit; nothin' very bad, though. Shall I fill you out a cup o' tea, ma'am?"

"Thanks, Dolly," said pretty Mrs. Shadwell, smiling. Old Dorothy's prattle amused her, as she leaned back in her cushioned chair.

"They boxed one night, they did, poor little fellows, him and Master Mark, and I threatened I'd complain; but they made it up—ha, ha, ha! Oh! he was noways spiteful, was Master Roke; a nice little fellow!"

"How old was he then?" asked Miss Rachel.

"Well, dear, he wasn't much: about eleven, or twelve, or thirteen, I'd say, but it's a good bit agone; it's thirty odd years—thirty-five, I think. Thirty-five and thirteen. He'll be past forty now! Aye, dear, dear!"

And she uttered these ejaculations in a prolonged note, which implied the wonder and regret of a discovery, and which a man might have conveyed by an equivalent whistle,

"Ay, ay! it will be—forty—you're good at figures, Miss Rachel. Hey, dear! that's too old for *you,* miss; ay, dear, it would not do! I was

thinkin', when I heard of him comin', and he so pretty, it was, may be, after Miss Rachel he'd be lookin'; but she's very young, and forty—I don't know! What do *you* think, ma'am?'

"Why, Dolly, you foolish old thing you! I believe he was in love with mamma, so he's old enough to be my father. Have you no pleasanter plan for getting rid of me?"

Her mamma laughing, shook her head, and old Dolly said, generously—

"Well, Miss Rachel, you know, it's as *you* like, not as *he*, and you *may* like him well enough when you see him, who knows? and forty-six or fifty's nothing. Hoo! tut! nothing at all, if you *knew*."

And thus encouraged, Rachel threw back her pretty locks, and laughed heartily as she dropped into a chair.

"And *was* he courting you, ma'am?—was he *really*, now?" inquired old Dolly.

"I don't know, Dolly, I'm sure; they said he was," answered she, laughing again.

"I shouldn't wonder—no, I shouldn't; for I mind the first time I saw you, and I think you were the prettiest lass I ever set eyes on in all my days ever."

"Old Dolly is a partial witness, I'm afraid," said the sickly lady, smiling prettily on her, and from her to her daughter.

"No, she isn't, mamma; she's an honest old thing, and if she said any thing else it would be a wicked fib, for at this moment you're the very prettiest person I ever saw."

"My foolish little Rachel!" said her mamma, smiling very fondly on her.

"No! I'm your wise little woman; you know I am; you always say I am, except when I praise you." And with these words Rachel threw her arms about her mother's neck, and kissed her again and again.

"He's a bachelor, ain't he, ma'am?" inquired Dolly Wyndle, recollecting on a sudden that she was imperfectly informed.

"Yes; an old bachelor," said she.

"Not so old but he has lots of time to marry in," said Dorothy, recurring, I suppose, to her original plan.

"It's quite true, Dolly; they marry at all ages: never too old," laughed her mistress.

Never! *That's* what I say, ma'am, isn't it? and he's awful rich, isn't he?"

"There are much richer men; but he's very well."

"And will it all come to Master Mark if he dies without no children?" asked she.

"No, nothing; not a guinea."

"Well, that's bad, it is. I wish he *would* take a fancy to Miss Rachel here: who knows?"

"Come, Dolly, we must not talk nonsense. He's an old bachelor, an invalid, and has been very wild—I believe wicked—in his youth, and I don't believe would be likely to make a wife happy; and it would not do to talk that kind of folly: you *mustn't*."

"Well, it *is* a pity, and she so handsome, shut up in this place—it's awful lonesome, you know; and I was lookin' at her, I was, t'other day, dancin' so pretty, and the governess; and, quoth I to myself, 'Well, an' if a Lunnon lord was to see *that*, he *couldn't* but fancy her.'"

And up jumped Rachel, laughing. And the girl threw her arms around the neck of her laughing mamma, and, bidding her a fond good-night, ran away to her bedroom.

"A wild little creature, Dolly! Thank heaven, she's so merry! What would this place be without her, I often think? Poor little thing! I sometimes pity her; and yet it is better, perhaps, she should never have known any but this melancholy place, seeing she must live in it," said Mrs. Shadwell.

"*Melancholy!* Well, now, I don't know. What's there so dull in't? It's a fine place ma'am—beautiful trees; and Hazelden!—it's ten years, ye wouldn't believe, since I saw Hazelden, though 'tisn't a mile and half along the park—and Wynderfel! old walls they be, and them old graves there! I mind the last time I was there—ten years it is—ha! ha! ha! Dearie me! Wynderfel! I think it's the darkest wood anywhere on English ground; goin' down by the hollow there, I'm sure on't. And them old walls with the ivy, that's the spot, nigh hand, where old John Gildford saw the Evil One, wi' horns on's head, sitting on the pixies' stone! Often I heard old John tell it when I was no longer than the leg of the table there; and a steady man was John, and a godly; ye don't see men so gi'en to church and sermons now as John Gildford. Ye don't mind old John, do ye? Na, no! He was gone—oh! ay—long afore your time! Old master respected John Gildford very much, and gev him as good a coffin, a'most, as he got himself, when *his* turn came. Straight bed, ma'am, then, and narrow house, fits rich and poor—all's one; sleep sound, without no turn nor start, when work's done, till mornin', in sure and certain hope—ye know, ma'am, what they put on the grave-stones: that's what we're to look to. Parson Temple preaches beautiful on that; he's a good man, is Parson Temple. I like to see him comin' to Raby, I do; and I wish, ma'am (lowering her voice), master liked him better. I wish master took more after his mother; she was a godly woman, she was, poor little thing!—I wish he would, and a thought less after the poor old master. God forgi'e me! not any wrong I mean; only neither on 'em cared for such-like, nor minded church nor sermons—nothing, a'most; but good men—mind ye! I don't mean nothin' wrong—and I'm talkin' ower much," she wound up briskly, "and work to be done, like an 'old talkin' fool, as I be!"

And so the question of quarters and commissariat was once more entered on with her accustomed vigor and clearness by energetic old Dolly.

CHAPTER VIII.

MISS MARLYN INQUIRES.

At the beginning of this chapter it was very late. The old clock at the stair-head of Raby had struck twelve some time ago. Agnes Marlyn had been sitting up in Rachel's room, gossiping with her about many things, as young ladies will sit up together sometimes in a chatty mood; still she was there, narrating French adventures and experiences, describing rural scenes and school vexations, happy hours and regrets, tyrants, and friends, oh! so dear, and all the story tinged with that sentiment, so sad and pure,

which she knew how, with tones and looks, almost without the help of words, to shed, like a sunset light, over her little gossipings.

She had now got up to bid her companion good-night, for the twentieth time, yet she still hesitated for a moment.

"So there is some one coming here—have you heard?" asked Agnes, as she stood by the little dressing-table in Rachel's room.

"Yes, Sir Roke Wycherly," answered the girl.

"Sir Roke Wycherly!" repeated Miss Marlyn slowly; "what a very odd name!"

"Yes, an odd name," answered Rachel, who was brushing her rich fair hair before the glass; "and, I fancy, an odd person, too."

"Ha, ha! there are so many odd persons in England," said Agnes Marlyn. "Sir Roke Wycherly:—an old friend of your papa's, I dare say?"

"An old friend! yes, a cousin. They were at Eton together, mamma says, and he's an invalid."

"A cousin?"

"Yes; some kind of cousin. I suppose, having been school-fellows, he and papa are very fond of one another."

"I am sorry he's coming," said Miss Marlyn.

"Why? What are you afraid of?" said Rachel, gayly. "I think it a blessing—I really do: quite a mercy any one coming; although, I dare say, I shall be horribly afraid of him; but I'm very glad, for all that."

"I am sorry," repeated Agnes Marlyn.

"And why?" reiterated Rachel.

"Why? I don't know: that is I *do* know."

"*Well?*" said Rachel, looking over her shoulder, and expecting an explanation.

Agnes laughed suddenly, paused, and then said in her usual tone—

"I *am* sorry, and I'll tell you why. I like quiet; I love this so quiet place; I love you; I love your mamma; there is no one coming can make it happier."

"And do you like papa?" asked Rachel, a little abruptly.

Agnes Marlyn looked at her rather oddly, and laughed again. The girl was looking at herself straight and frankly in the glass as she arranged her soft golden hair.

"Your papa! I am sure he is a good man, but I can not say I *like* him, for I do not *know* him; and, to say truth, I think I am a little afraid of him—and so are you, are you not?"

"I *am* afraid of him. I always was; and yet he never was cruel—no, of course, not cruel!—I mean, he never was harsh; he was never unkind to me," said Rachel.

"Nor ever kind," said Agnes Marlyn, and laughed once more.

"He's so clever!" said Rachel.

"How do you know? He never speaks to you," said Miss Marlyn.

"Mamma says—that's how I know—he was quite different when he was young: very gay."

"Gay, was he?"

"Gay spirits, I mean—a witty man—and very much admired; but, you know, those wicked creditors—those people that are always teasing him about money—they have made him so gloomy: things they call mortgages. Horrid wickedness *I* call it, to torment a fellow-creature the way mamma says they worry papa!" said Miss Rachel, with spirit.

"Nine men out of ten have debts, dear," said Miss Marlyn. "He ought to be happy: he loves you and your mamma very much."

Miss Rachel looked round from the glass upon her handsome companion. She saw nothing in her countenance but a listless melancholy.

"Yes, of course, he loves mamma very much, and that, I dare say, makes him suffer more, because he knows she must suffer with him."

"That is very generous," said Agnes Marlyn.

Again Rachel looked at her, but no sign of irony appearing, she turned again to her glass, and a little silence ensued.

"But, my dear Rachel," resumed Agnes Marlyn, "though he is so generous—"

"I did not say he's generous, though I dare say he is," said Rachel; "of course he is—too generous, or he would not be so much worried with debts as he is."

"Well, I mean so good, and all that; yet, I think he is a very stern man; and you must not be angry, but I am always afraid of him, and would rather not see him coming—would rather not meet him, and I never feel quite at ease while he is in the room."

Another pause followed.

"And *you* are afraid, also," added Miss Marlyn.

"I said so—*yes*—but *afraid* is hardly the right word; it is more a strangeness. When I was a little thing, I was always told to be silent when he was in the room; as long as I can remember, he was always melancholy and—"

"Cross," suggested Miss Marlyn.

"Cross. No," replied Rachel, whose pride was touched by this girl's daring to criticise her papa so boldly; "he has a great deal to vex him, and—and—let us talk of something else."

"Well, Rachel, we are very happy here: I love this old place, so grand and forlorn, for I, too, am a melancholy person like your papa, more perhaps, and I love this solitary Raby better. I dare say, than he does; I love you, Rachel, as I said, and I love your mamma; I wonder does she love—no, *not* love *like* me!"

There was inquiry in Miss Marlyn's plaintive tone, but it was like the inquiry of a soliloquy, in low and dreamy notes, with her fine eyes lowered to the table, and her pretty hand to her chin.

There came a little silence here. There were moments when Rachel felt oddly toward this young governess, a disposition to challenge and snub her suddenly. Why should there be loving and liking so soon? what, in seven months' time, had she done for them, or they for her, that could found a serious sentiment of that kind? Was it a suspicion of a sham, with the impatience that accompanies it? She could not tell; only, having finished the arrangement of her hair, she leaned back in her chair, with her chin a little raised and her eyes nearly closed, and answered nothing.

Miss Marlyn sighed softly, and looked full and sadly on her pupil, and said, as if she had divined what was in her mind—

"I am, perhaps, a fool to talk of loving and liking."

"I don't expect you to like me much, or love me at all, on so short an acquaintance," said Rachel.

"Yes, that is true; you are all so good to me, I forget how short it is: it is gratitude that makes attachment in a day. I owe it *all* to you; you can owe *none* to me—so it is."

Agnes Marlyn said this with a sad sort of sincerity, that touched the girl, who opened her blue eyes, and placed her hand kindly on that of her governess.

"What *can* put such things in your head?—you are not to talk so," said Rachel, repentant.

"And I shall leave you soon—yes—yes, dear, not voluntarily, but it must be; you can not long need a governess, in effect—it is almost time I should go."

"But I must have some friend with me here always, mamma says, and she would prefer you to any other—she says so, and so should I, Pucelle," answered Rachel; "therefore you are not to fancy that, because I have no *sentiment*, I don't *like* people, for I like *you*—I do, indeed; I like you *very* much."

"No sentiment! I fancied the same of myself once," said Miss Marlyn, "but it needed only time and affliction to prove to me that I *had*—time will make a like discovery to you, dear Rachel."

"I hope not, Pucelle;" she called Agnes by that name from a fancied resemblance to a pretty old print in her bedroom. "Mamma says that all romantic people are unhappy."

"That is true," said Miss Marlyn, with a sigh; "I am romantic: you are too young, dear Rachel, to understand the force of that word—I am unhappy—I care not for money—I care not for the world."

"I like you the better for that, Pucelle," said Rachel; "I hate to see people always making up sums, and counting their gains and losses; and, besides, the Bible says it's wicked to love money, and I don't know, really, why they do, or what they can want of all the money they are always wishing for."

And Rachel thought over these propositions; being very young and innocent of tradesmen's bills, and, I dare say, it was one of her axioms that one's house, and one's meals, and all that sort of commonplace, came by nature.

"Yes, I have been a fool; I have lived too much from my heart, too little from my head. It is very necessary to be a little selfish. I will try; but, *hélas!* I know I shall not be able—so impetuous!—so foolish!" and, with these words, Miss Marlyn stamped her foot lightly on the ground, and pressed her shut hand to her brow.

"Agnes, I think I'm like you, I'm sure I am," said Rachel. "I know, at all events, I like you for that kind of feeling, and I hope you may never succeed in changing your character. Don't try; you'll only injure it."

"Ah! thank heaven, then, there is one person on earth who does understand me." Yes, Rachel, you do. Good-night, dearest; itis very late." And, with a kiss, she hurried from the room.

CHAPTER IX.

MARK SHADWELL ENGAGES A SECRETARY.

Beautiful Agnes Marlyn, with her candle in her hand, as she trod lightly along the passage toward her chamber, looking with one stealthy glance over her shoulder toward the door of her young companion, which she had just softly closed, might have furnished a painter with an image for some spirit of a by gone and guilty beauty, haunting those old galleries, and visiting the curtains of midnight sleepers to shape their dreams; for there was in her large dark eyes, and in the curve of her eyebrows, an evil care—something wild and dismal—as she glided alone along the gallery in slippered feet.

Raby Hall is very old, as you know; the buttery and the spicery still bear their traditional names there. It was re-edified in Elizabeth's time, and has been little altered since. It could hardly be said to be, nowadays, inhabited at all. Mark Shadwell and his few retainers occupied their nook of warmth and life in this great and forlorn structure; but the light of habitation was lost in the waste of general darkness, like the gleam of a homestead on a moor. Miss Marlyn's weaknesses were not, however, of the superstitious kind. She might be walking amidst those desert places where evil spirits inhabit, but she did not care about such things. The fears of that beautiful girl such as they were, were all of the earth, earthy; therefore it was only that kind of start which may occur at any time and anywhere that, on turning the corner of the gallery leading to her room, Miss Agnes Marlyn suddenly met Mr. Shadwell.

There were not two steps between them as they met. He, like her, had his bedroom candle in his hand, and in his other he carried a dispatch-box, charged with those weary papers—the multitudinous children of his early follies, the inexorable tyrants of his matured years. John Bunyan's Christian did not walk under a heavier load than that little dispatch-box. It bent Shadwell with his face to the earth—it half broke his heart.

He stood before Miss Marlyn—now for a moment scarcely feeling it—with a surprised and haggard countenance, candle in hand, and stared at this timid beauty for some seconds before he spoke.

"By Jove, Miss Marlyn! I did not expect to see you again to-night. I'm afraid I startled you. It's very odd."

Of course it was very odd. It was one o'clock, and Miss Marlyn and her pupil were usually in bed at about ten. But he could not be very angry, for he laughed ever so little, and Miss Agnes Marlyn said, in a contrite way that was very pretty—

"I am so sorry, sir; I have been sitting up with Rachel much too late. We really quite forgot the time, and I am very sorry, Mr. Shadwell, and I hope you are not displeased!"

"Displeased—*If*" said Mark Shadwell; "quite the contrary. There, you need not look puzzled, I'm quite serious—I'm *glad* I met you. What are you afraid of?"

"I'm not afraid, Mr. Shadwell."

"No, you're not such a fool." He laid his dispatch-box on the window-sill beside him. "I said it was odd my meeting you, because it happened I was at that moment thinking of you and very selfishly, too. May I go on?"

"I'm so tired, sir; perhaps in the morning," Miss Marlyn began, with a very low courtesy.

He looked on her with a bold sort of admiration as he might on a pretty picture.

"I like that," he said; "one of the old French courtesies that our grandmothers used to make; a beautiful courtesy by all the graces of Versailles. it ought to be made in brilliants, powder, and brocade; one of the courtesies that have lingered In quaint old corners of France, where the vulgar sweep of the Revolution never rushed."

"Good-night, Mr. Shadwell," she said, dropping her eyes very gravely, and "addressing herself" to pass him.

"Pray not, for a moment. You need not reprove me; how do you know I deserve reproof?" said he, a little sharply.

"Reprove, sir? I merely wished to pass," said Miss Agnes Marlyn, holding her head high, and looking straight before her, beautifully sulky.

"So you shall; can't you wait a moment? You seem to fancy I'm a *fool*. I'm no such thing. I'm perfectly sober, perfectly serious; and what I have to say, I fancy, you'll think not of the slightest consequence, though you may think it a bore. I want to know—you'll really do me an essential kindness if you will—*will* you consent to be my secretary?"

"I don't know, Mr. Shadwell, what you mean," said the young lady gravely.

"Literally what I say," he replied, a little dryly. "You need not be in such haste. Really, in this house there's no sort of oddity in my venturing to say a few words on so dry a subject when we happen to meet just for a moment. I say in *this* house, because it's such a solitude that there is really no difference between one hour and another, no matter where one may be; and, therefore, I may as well say what I wish, here and now, as in precisely the same sort of solitude to-morrow morning."

Miss Marlyn looked haughtily over her shoulder—one would have fancied for succor, but no one appeared.

"I have never practiced the duties of secretary, sir," she said.

"But you can write a good hand, and you can write a clever letter, and—I never pay compliments—I'm quite past that happy time of life. You'll find I'm a mere man of business—though a very indifferent one—and I assure you, Miss Marlyn, I make my request, odd as you may fancy it, with the most respectful seriousness, and I shall be very really obliged if you will be so kind as to grant it. Pray, a moment. I've considered it. I'll tell you in a word how I am circumstanced. My daughter, as you see, though she's clever, I believe, knows nothing. My poor wife—her state of health, you know—can't be of the slightest assistance, and I am literally overwhelmed with letters. Carmel Sherlock—the queer fellow you've seen here—he's a capital accountant, and knows how every tenant on the estate stands, and the park-book, and all that, but he could no more write a letter than he could make a watch; he has no brains, and there's an end; and upon my honor, if you won't give me a lift, Miss Marlyn, I don't know what's to become of me. I'm not jesting, very far from it, and I'll release you now, only begging of you not to refuse without at least considering; and, if you have no objection, I shall be so very much obliged if you could copy two or three letters for me—not very long; and—but I see you'd rather put off saying till to-morrow; so I shan't venture to delay you longer. Good-night, Miss Marlyn.'

"Good-night, sir."

He picked up his dispatch-box, and she glided away, light in hand, swiftly down the gallery, like the bleeding nun, whose figure must have been very pretty, and her action also, to have been mistaken by a lover for *his* Agnes.

Mark Shadwell looking after her, held his candle, as it were, to light her down the corridor, forgetting that it was unnecessary.

As she passed out of sight his handsome face gleamed into one of his satiric smiles, and his even row of teeth glittered strangely after her in the candle-light.

He shrugged.

"How exactly they are, one and all, made after the same pattern! What pains they take to hook us first, and then they let us play ourselves! She mistakes *me*, though. A stoic—quite above that, d—n her!" This indefensible execration was pronounced, not angrily, but with a little laugh, and a shake of the head.

And late as it was, Mr. Mark Shadwell whistled low a few bars of an old-fashioned air as he walked to his bedroom, where he set down his box with an angry crash on the table, and weary, bitter, and sullen, got into bed with a yawn and a groan; there awaiting the uncertain visit of slumber, as the sick man at the pool of Bethesda might the descent of the Angel.

CHAPTER X.

MISS MARLYN LOCKS HER DOOR, AND UNLOCKS HER DESK.

That girl, Agnes Marlyn! It was like a dream his meeting and talking with her. Why had he stopped her there? He almost laughed as he lay thinking of his folly. He had done it without a thought. She looked so lovely he could not pass her by without a word. "I'm not quite sure that I understand that girl. She was not intended for a governess. If her mother had not died—if her father hadn't—unlucky for her, poor little devil! She's sweetly pretty—If Jack Marlyn had lived—a clever fellow, and a staff appointment—that Indian war would have made him. I don't quite understand her. Her mother—her mother was a demirep, wasn't she? Mrs. Marlyn, some one told me—who was it? Some one *did*. And a French boarding-school. Ha, ha, ha! I wonder what sort of school it is!"

He thought in this vein, perhaps truly, that he did not understand her quite. He fancied she had thrown herself very much in his way. "And what did the gipsy mean by her dignity and stuff to-night? She must have known he had no notion of carrying her off like a Sabine belle. I do believe their whole life is such a system of counterfeit and affectation, they don't know themselves when they are in earnest and when they are acting."

And so this brief glimpse of flowers and sunshine closed, and the thick folds and dun fog of his cares broke over and rolled in and about him, and he lay among the shadows of his gigantic mortgages, planning far-off battles and new combinations.

Half-undressed by this time, Agnes Marlyn, having bolted her door, unlocked her little desk—an odd little desk—of some dark wood inlaid all round with small rings and leaves and flowers of brass—a pretty little desk, perhaps made after some old traditional pattern in vogue two hundred years ago, and still known to humdrum craftsmen about dreamy old provincial towns in France. I wonder whether it was a lover's gift—the offering, perhaps, of an adoring worker in brass and rosewood—his *chef-d'œuvre*, love-sick, and utterly Quixotic, and he was blest in thinking that so much of his labor was really bestowed on her, that, in very truth, her pretty fingers every day opened and closed that desk that he had worked at, and thought, and sighed over so long.

Miss Agnes Marlyn took the letter she had that evening received. It was open; she was not now about to read it for the first time. Standing by the table, with her bedroom candle raised in her left hand, she read it over again with a sort of smile, subtle, contemptuous, amused, yet anxious.

Twice she read it, and the same strange quiet smile again stole ever her features. Then she thought profoundly, then for the third time read the letter through, and turned round the back of the envelope, and looked at that, and so at last locked it up again, and when she was nearly undressed, she fell into deep rumination, sitting on the side of her bed for nearly ten minutes, and did not recollect herself until the chill recalled her.

So with a little shudder up she stood, shook her beautiful dark tresses round her shoulders, and gathered them into a few great folds, and prayerless, got into her bed, extinguished her candle, and laid upon the pillow her small head, full of the vapors and chimeras of the letter that lay under the lock of her desk.

Poor Mrs. Shadwell, that confirmed invalid, appeared not at breakfast. The party consisted of Miss Marlyn, Rachel, Mark Shadwell, and Carmel Sherlock. It was not always a cheerful meal.

Sometimes the master of Raby chose to talk, and then the room became animated a little. But the party stood in awe of him; he would sit in a lowering silence, dark as a thundercloud, and people asked for "butter," or "more sugar," in whispers. But this morning he spoke, placing beside him the last letter of the batch which had reached him by that morning's post.

"No letter for *you*, Miss Marlyn, this morning," said he, suddenly raising his eyes.

"Mine are very few," said Agnes, without raising hers.

"Much to be pitied, you are; you like, of course, to get lots of them. I remember when I liked them. By Jove, I do!" and being bitterly amused, he laughed; "Rachel there, never gets any. No friends, Rachel? So much the better, girl. *I* had lots of friends, I know, and some of them helped to pigeon me, and others are never done plaguing me, and I can't recollect *one* that ever did me a good turn, upon my *soul!*"

"There is, there is, sir, an humble friend," said Carmel Sherlock, looking full at him, rather sorrowfully, with his large eyes; "one friend that would gladly serve you, if he could—if he *could*."

"Oh! pooh! Carmel, my good fellow, I know that, of course; I was thinking of the fellows who write letters and tease one. I reckon on *you*, of course," replied Mark Shadwell, impatiently; "but you see, Miss Marlyn, that letters and friends are not quite the blessings you young people take them for. Life is made up of illusions, devilish disagreeable ones—the breaking up, I mean, and discovery when you come to see things as they are. 'Tis not the golden age, by any means, I can tell you that; nor Arcadia even, nor a pageant, nor even a holiday."

Agnes Marlyn did not breathe a sigh and look plaintive, as an indifferent *tragedienne* might at these words, but she raised her beautiful mysterious gaze gravely to his eyes, and looked like one who had heard a melancholy truth which was to her no revelation.

"Sometimes, of course, a friend does turn up; once, perhaps, in a life," said Mark Shadwell, returning Miss Marlyn's gaze steadily; and she lowered her eyes in a proud and pensive reverie.

"There's Sherlock, I think I may reckon on Sherlock; you *need* not say, I *know* it. But, by Jove! I don't know many more; I'm not certain I know *one*—ha, ha, ha!"

Mark Shadwell spoke of Carmel Sherlock as if he had bought him body and soul by some enormous service. This way of talking and thinking was generated by poor Sherlock's immense and simple gratitude for very small benefits. He had picked up that dreamy creature in distress, and brought him here to Raby, where for light wages he received from him very useful services, and a loyalty and gratitude that had the extravagance almost of insanity. It rather pleased Mark Shadwell to figure on these easy terms in the character of a benefactor. He could not for double the sum have procured from any other man half the work, yet I believe he honestly fancied that he was, on the whole, the savior of Carmel Sherlock—that in a freak of disinterested good nature he had rescued him from the miseries of a world for which he was unfit. Mark Shadwell, therefore, received his allegiance graciously, and applauded his gratitude.

He was besides in especial good humor with Carmel Sherlock this morning. He had relieved him immensely respecting his arrear to Sir Roke, which turned out to be an enormous mistake by reason of the rent-charge payable out of Queen's Hockley by the baronet, which Mark Shadwell, a lazy man of business, with ideas all at sixes and sevens about his affairs, had quite misapplied in his reckoning.

"Well, I thought it could hardly be; I *told* you I was surprised. It went out of my head, because, you see, I never got a farthing by it, and I fancied Lewis's agent got it."

"It ought to have been brought into the account—yes," said Carmel, "I never heard of it till to-day. The attorney's letter—the Demon of Socrates—you know, sir, a sudden thought—a thought, an *impulse*."

"Wherever there's an attorney, there's a demon, of course. There was no *danger*, for Dolby & Keane have it all up in those d—d tin box-

es of theirs; but I'm glad it's off my mind; hang it, it's a mountain gone. And see, Carmel, will you ride down and try and make out what those fellows at the mill want, for I'm hanged if *I* can make any thing of it; and take Will Byers along with you: he's sharper than you or I: and make a note of what they say."

Carmel, always pale, paler now than usual, stood by the door, which he held open for the young ladies as they left the breakfast-room.

"Yes, certainly—yes, sir," he answered with a little start.

"And the sooner the better," said Shadwell, briskly. Whereupon Carmel, with a sigh, turned, and shaking back his lank black hair, walked slowly to the hall.

"Miss Marlyn—I beg your pardon—one word—just a moment, please," said Mark Shadwell, following her with this summons from the door; "will you come, just for a moment, to the study?"

The young lady turned.

"I shall follow in a moment. Your papa wants to speak to me, Rachel dear."

Shadwell, with a swift step, reached his study, and by this time was leaning with his elbow on the chimney-piece. He felt a little oddly; a return, though very faint, of those boyish flutterings which he vividly remembered now, though he would as easily have suspected a relapse into kites and marbles. This sort of embarrassment somehow wounded his pride. He heard the rustling of her dress at the door, and a little tapping.

"Come in, please," said Mark Shadwell, with a look and a tone a little more haughty than he was accustomed to address to her.

And the young lady entered, carrying her head a little high, and with eyes lowered to the floor, and a flush on her cheeks, and he fancied a faster heaving than usual under the folds of her dress that came up to her throat.

She stood very gravely near the door, expecting, with downcast eyes, and looking quite bewitching, he thought.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MASTER AND THE SECRETARY.

So bewitching, indeed, he thought her, that he paused for some seconds, gazing on the beautiful picture.

She still looked down, standing at the study door. Whatever the cause, there certainly was a bright flush at her cheek, a short, slight, quick breathing he had observed, and her attitude somehow indicated suspense, and had, he fancied, an indescribable alarm and prettiness.

"Miss Marlyn," he began, "you made me a kind of promise last night, didn't you?—when I by good fortune met you for a moment and told you my distresses—that you would be so really good as to give me a little help, don't you remember? so I want to know—I'm afraid it's very unreasonable—whether you *could* now and then copy a paper or write a letter for me? You have no idea what a real kindness you'd confer upon a very tired and overworked poor devil."

Miss Marlyn had grown a little pale, and drew a long breath—or sighed. I know not whether the deep and sullen respiration was due to a sentiment or only to a sense of relief.

With a faint tumult at his heart, that yet half vexed him, the morose recluse of Raby witnessed these evidences of a confusion, so flattering to the vanities of a man no longer young.

"Perhaps I am *too* unreasonable," said Mark Shadwell, in a lower tone; "and, perhaps, you forget all about it?"

"No, indeed, I do not forget," answered Miss Marlyn, in tones as low, and raising for a moment her eyes to his; "I ought to have said at once I should be most happy; it will be a great pleasure to me to undertake, always, any service where my duty is owed."

"That's very good of you, very kind, Miss Marlyn. I'm quite serious. I am really very much obliged. I've a paper here; I must send a copy of it to Dolby & Keane, and I'm afraid it is an awful bore, but really I don't know how to find time sometimes—you've no idea."

"I'm only afraid I shan't do it well, sir—I'll try—I'll do my best, and you won't be vexed, please, if I fail."

The young lady spoke so deprecatingly that Mark Shadwell felt obliged to encourage her.

"I promise you, whatever you do, I shan't be angry, in fact, child, I *couldn't*. I call you child because you *are* really a second daughter here, and I am bound to take care of you, you know, and to make you as happy as I can; so, don't fancy I'll blow you up if you make a mistake; and I've a theory that mistakes are made by ugly people, and nearly all the mischief in the world is due to them; and, you know very well, you don't belong to that order of beings. I dare say many a poor fellow will have reason to wish you *did* before all's over."

The lady still looked down. You could not have told from her face whether these speeches pleased or vexed her, only she looked embarrassed, and that look was very becoming.

"I think you're impatient to go," said he.

"Miss Shadwell is waiting, sir," she answered.

"Call her Rachel, why don't you? and pray don't say *sir* quite so often. I wish you to feel at home here, *quite* at home—I really *do*, and shall feel myself very much complimented if you will consent to drop that odious term. You know your dear father was a *very* dear friend of mine (Mark ipmroved this by-gone intimacy for the occasion). One of my very dearest friends, and it really is quite ridiculous your calling me *sir* as you do. This is the paper, not very long, you see—thanks; and you know you are my secretary now; and you shan't call me *sir* any more—and now good-bye—and I'm really very much obliged."

And he took her hand before she saw it, and pressed it for a moment to indicate how much obliged he was.

And now she was gone, the door closed, and he alone in the room, where it seemed to his dazzled eyes the tinted glow and outline of that beautiful girl still remained where she had been standing. How was it that she seemed so much more beautiful than ever? How was it that this soured and sullen man of the world, a *blasé* rake—a stoic—a sceptic, quite philosophically regenerate, as he boasted—past the age of illusion and impulse—felt on a sudden so strangely? Are we ever past the age of impulse and ro-

mance? Is not the insensibility of age in this respect but the resignation of despair? Once persuade a man, no matter whether he be fifty or *sixty* years old, that he is regarded for any reason, say his wit or his fame, by a young and beautiful woman with the sort of interest he has long despaired of inspiring, and what boy so romantically wild as that old fellow?

Here was Mark Shadwell, some nine-and-forty years a wonderfully preserved man, not without remains of his early beauty; a man, indeed, early hardened in the ways of pleasure, and yet a new and fresher interest had visited him; a sentiment long-forgotten, curious, absorbing now and then.

He leaned on the chimney-piece, looking toward the door, not thinking, hardly dreaming, the state was too still—as gods are painted reposing on rose-tinted and soft golden clouds, in self-satisfying contemplation. So, leaning on the cold and polished stone which he felt not, Mark Shadwell, in entire mental inaction, in the luxury of one vague idea, reposed in serene beatitude and elation.

But this state is transitory as the glow of sunset, and the chill and twilight of Mark Shadwell's customary depression stole over him.

The discovery of the real state of his account with Sir Roke Wycherly was an immense relief to Mark Shadwell. His spirits had expanded for a time, but quickly the vague sense of danger with which Sir Roke's meditated visit had before been associated returned.

He had known Roke Wycherly well and long, better than he knew himself—always selfish, a cold hard heart. What on earth did he care if the inhabitants of Raby were one and all dead and buried? Nothing. Why, then, did he propose this visit to Raby, forlorn and dull? This troubled him. There was some little question, he could not recollect what, he had never understood it, about his title. There had been a correspondence about it in his father's time, reserved, laconic, and defiant. It had subsided, and nothing came of it. But he remembered well how transformed his father was pending that unpleasant controversy, that he grew gloomy, fidgety, and silent; that he shut himself up a great deal in the library, and addicted himself to solitary walks, that his temper was short and dangerous, and that no one liked to go near him unnecessarily.

The whole thing had made an impression on his childish imagination as a picture of great suffering—a shadow of that outer darkness—a beginning of that tribulation—an inkling of the worm and the fire—with which the billious old Rector of Wynderfel, in his loud and hollow tones, used to threaten so awfully on Sundays.

The alarm had passed away; his father had emerged from the horror of great darkness; and he heard no more of the debate of title-deeds, fines, and recoveries. But he had once since then looked into the correspondence in the chambers of Messrs. Dolby & Keane. It left an unpleasant impression. There was that kind of dipping and drawing together which is seen between cloud and sea when a water-spout threatens. It did not actually form, but cloud and sea were there; and here again was a menace: what else could it mean?

"He'll come, and he'll go; he doesn't know what to do with himself—used up; so he runs down here, as fellows descend into a lead mine, or go to Norway, for want of something new—just for the chance of a new idea. Too much ease, too much money, too much pleasure—life grows tiresome—ha! ha! It's but a choice between life and death. Death, of the two, I should say, is the more tiresome. And they say he has been tapping at your chest."

Vaguely, but substantially, as this soliloquy runs, ran the current of Mark Shadwell's reasonings, as he strove to shake off the unaccountable uneasiness that returned as often as he thought of Roke Wycherly's visit.

There was an old quarrel. Sir Roke, when they were both young, had outwitted his kinsman in an affair of the heart. It had nearly taken a tragic turn, but friends interposed, and an unnatural duel was prevented. So years had passed away. Mark Shadwell, proud and vindictive as he was, had, in his way, forgiven this and many other trespasses; and they had "buried the hatchet," which might yet be disinterred.

CHAPTER XII.

THE WALLS OF WYNDERFEL.

Far away beyond Hazelden—beyond the ruined manor-house of Wynderfel—next evening, Mark Shadwell had wandered through the rabbit-haunted woodlands with his gun. The sun was setting, the birds whistling their vespers from a thousand boughs, as that gentleman, with the fatigue of dejection, sat down upon the rude stone seat—a relic of other times and their hospitable care for the wayfarer—which still stands in the now solitary region of the old park, under the roofless gables of Wynderfel.

He looked up at its grey walls, his eyes wandering listlessly from window to window, and from one tall, smokeless chimney to another, over which the jackdaws were wheeling. Dismally he looked upon the relics of the old manorial residence of generations of Shadwells, before the Raby estate had united itself with Wynderfel by marriage. He was thinking, as he looked, that the Shadwells of those days must have been very great people. It was the finest house of its time in the country. What lots of chimneys there were! and he thought how hospitable the place must have looked when they were all smoking; and how those empty windows were once pleasant with pretty faces—the Shadwells were a handsome race;—and the stables, and kennels, and offices, among whose silent buttresses the elder and hawthorne were growing now, were astir with horses, dogs, and hawks; and, from his readings in Walter Scott's romances, he peopled the deserted court-yard with jesters, knights, falconers, and a masquerade of old-world splendor.

"And all this was ours! And what is left us now? What would they think of Mark Shadwell, of Raby, I wonder, in this costume, without a guinea—a seedy recluse—who never knows one year whether he's to have a house over his head the next?"

Mark Shadwell raised his eyes again, lighted a cigar, and grew serene and contemplative as

he smoked it—less bitter about himself—more wrapt up in the tranquil glories of the past.

The memory of pain is short-lived. The retrospect is sunny; the best days always in the past. The illusion runs beyond our ken, into other centuries, among buried generations; and we look on their relics as those of a golden age, when times were plentiful, and men all kind, and women beautiful, and heads and hearts never ached.

"Merry England it was then!" said Mark Shadwell, lowering his cigar: he had read an extract from an essay on the subject somewhere. "So it was! No gambling; none of those d—d places where you're robbed; no debts; plenty of fun; plenty of every thing; and old families where they should be! Now it's all mortgages, and tradesmen, and upstarts, and money, and smash!"

He was obliged to stop, for, as his eloquence was kindling, his cigar was dying out, and he was fain to replace it between his lips and puff a little anxiously until it was aglow again.

There is a state of pleasant and active observation of passing things; a state also of dreaming, a state of thinking, and another state for which in due time metaphysicians will find a name quite distinct, in which there is a mental silence—thought and fancy nowhere—in which the eyes will rest unmoving on a tree, or distant hill; the mind a blank, in utter, yet strangely pleasurable, apathy.

In this state, smoking, with his eyes on the shield and Shadwell arms over the arch of the wide door, Mark Shadwell heard a voice close by him at the stile; a voice he did not like—quiet, low, and a little stern—a voice which was unlike his angry nature, for it was cold, and which always fired his pride, for it was, in its very tranquillity, commanding.

"Mr. Shadwell, I think? How d'ye do, Mr. Shadwell?" said the voice.

Shadwell had turned toward the speaker before the sentence ended, and saw the Reverend Richard Stour Temple, Vicar of Rydleston; a man of middle height and thin, with a pale face, closely shorn, and large, steady grey eyes. The level light of the setting sun shone across his features with an odd abruptness of light and shadow; the smile of greeting on his thin lips was slight and cold: his dress, though natty, had seen work, and was fashioned rather after the High Church manner.

"Oh! Mr. Temple how d'ye do? Charming evening for a ramble, isn't it?" said Shadwell, without rising. He did not like the vicar.

"Sweet evening, yes," said the vicar, extending his hand. Shadwell gave him two fingers to shake.

Mr. Temple had generally a word to say when he met Mark Shadwell, and so he seemed to have now, for he paused, and leaning rather than sitting on the bank, close by the old stone seat, he looked down upon the squire as his master at Harrow used, when he meditated a lecture.

"Very sweet evening," he resumed: "a little tired though;" and the vicar with his walking-stick knocked his dusty gaiter slightly. "I find my walks tell upon me more than they used; it's a good way to Pennelston: I've been to visit a tenant of yours, Abel Ford; poor man, he's dying; you have not heard, perhaps? You ought to look more, I think, after your tenants, Mr. Shadwell; it's not right."

He spoke this very quietly, with a little nod, folding his arms, and with reproving eyes fixed on the representative of the Shadwells of Raby, and of this old Wynderfel, whose long shadows were stretching over the turf beside them.

"You've told me that pretty often, sir," said Shadwell.

"No doubt; and you think me impertinent?" said the vicar, gravely.

"I do," said Shadwell, the indulgence of whose morose temper had grown upon him in his solitude.

"And yet, sir, it is but my duty. The man is dying; I've been praying with him—the office of the Church;" and he touched the coat-pocket in which lay the book. "I don't think he's properly attended to; he's poor, and has no wife, and his daughter has not turned out well, you know."

"No, I *don't* know; and if he is not attended to, I can't help it: I can't attend him, can I?"

"If you told your steward to speak to his cousin, who lives near him, he would look a little after him; he had no one last night to give him a drink," said the vicar.

"You churchmen are always for saddling men with duties. You don't ask what are their *privileges*—estates, indeed—tenants! You know perfectly well I'm a mere receiver over all this for others; you *treat* me so; you know devilish well, sir, you would not talk to me as you do if the estates were unencumbered, and I where I ought to be."

Thus snarled Mark Shadwell, with an angry eye upon the vicar, and laughed low to himself, turning his head slowly away.

"I've many faults, I dare say, but I don't think cowardice is one," replied Mr. Temple. "I thought it right to mention the circumstance; you can do as seems good to you."

"I can *not* do as seems good to me. How can a fellow do *any* thing without money? Such rot and nonsense!" These latter words were muttered contemptuously to the grass at his feet, but the vicar heard them, and Mark Shadwell did not care whether he did or not.

"When that old building was raised, Mr. Shadwell, our social relations were better understood," said the vicar, turning up his face toward the gables and gurgoils of Wynderfel, with a cold smile.

"I dare say," said Shadwell. "Gentlemen, for instance, did not give their advice in those days till it was asked for."

"Except churchmen," said the vicar, "whose thankless duty it is, uninvited, to instruct, to exhort, and to warn. Those who most need advice are the last to ask it. Were we to wait till erring mortals invited us to reprove them, our calling were vain indeed."

"Well, Mr. Temple, I dare say you *do* fancy you are doing your duty—I'm *sure* you do; and I assure you, though you talk sometimes about things you don't quite understand, and give me all sorts of impracticable advice, I respect you all the time, so you'll forgive my gruff talk, I can't help it; but, upon my soul, if you expect a poor devil like me to look after all those tenants, and find nurses for them when they're sick, and fun for them when they're well, you're

going rather too fast for me: I tell you once for all, I *can't*; I can do *nothing* for them; I never have a guinea to bless myself with; half of them are better off than *I* am; I wish you'd tell *them* to look after *me*, by Jove!"

"You know, Mr. Shadwell, as well as I," replied the vicar, gently and coldly, "that you *might* do a great deal more than you *do*: in the case I mentioned, for instance, but having mentioned it, I can do no more."

"Well, I don't care if I do what you say; I'll send down there to-morrow. If you'd just *ask* people quietly, and not mind lecturing, you'd often carry your point better, d'ye see? You're not vexed at my saying so?"

The vicar smiled, and bowed with a serenity in which one might have suspected a little contempt.

"Thanks, at all events, for your compliance with my present request," he said. "There was one other, I have often urged it, you perhaps remember?"

"Upon my life, I can't say; there have been a good many," answered Shadwell, darkening again.

"It is not much; that is, not much trouble, it was only this, that you would read just six verses of the New Testament every day."

Shadwell looked at him and laughed, as one might at a foolish saying of a child.

"I beg your pardon—you'll forgive me, but it sounds so odd; I know you mean it well, but it *does*, because I don't *believe* it; I think your New Testament is all a myth; Christianity is simply a philosophy which has survived others and better ones, just because it has condescended to ally itself with the principle of superstition, which is part of human nature."

The vicar, for the first time, looked sadly; he shook his head, and for some seconds silently watched the now fading splendor that flooded the wake of the sun that had gone down. There was in the sight something funereal that accorded with his thoughts.

"It's nothing new, you know; I've told you the same thing pretty often, and that's the foundation of our relations. I live in your parish, but I'm not your parishioner, though we are very good friends, don't you see? You're a Christian; I'm a philosopher," said Mark Shadwell, who was conceited of his smattering of Greek philosophies. "I don't say I'm a Platonist, an epicurean, or a stoic; *nullius addictus*, I don't *deal* all in one shop; every man who thinks, frames a system for himself. I'm an eclectic philosopher, if you please, and I'm very well satisfied with my credo!"

"I have argued it with you pretty often, Mr. Shadwell. I had hoped that time and reflection might have opened your eyes; there's an hour coming for each when we shall need more than the speculations of men."

"We all need more than we're ever likely to get," replied Mr. Shadwell; "but what enabled Socrates to meet death as he did, is enough for me."

"I'm not arguing it, mind. It is not a question to be settled in a five minutes' talk over a cigar, but I should be very happy if you would discuss it fully with me, or even if you would read a few books which I'll be glad to lend you."

"Thanks, no. The death of Socrates and the ——s of Hume; I don't think your calendar and martyrology can show much better. I'm ocntent."

Mark Shadwell, if not exactly content, was self-complacent; he lighted another cigar, and puffed a little smoke into the air, fancying that he had floored his opponent, who rose as if to go upon his way.

"And as for me," resumed Shadwell, lowering his cigar, "I can't say, of course, what sort of death I may die, but my life, I venture to say, is as moral as any parson's in England. I don't drink, I don't play; I live like an anchorite, every way; I don't even curse or swear, to signify, and I could give that up, if I liked. I hardly run up to town twice in the year, and then, upon my honor, it's only for business; you say I've no experience of Christianity, I say *you've* none of philosophy. I haven't a passion left in me, by Jove! Of course, a fellow can't help getting riled a bit, sometimes, but every other way, I'm as cold as a marble block. Take one of these, on your walk, won't you?" And Shadwell tendered his cigar-case.

"Thanks, no; I never smoke," said the vicar.

"If you were, as I am, looking at that old house, and remembering what *we* were there, once on a time, you'd know what it was to feel as I do," said Shadwell, pointing at the old walls with his cigar.

"No greater waste of time than regretting, except, I perhaps, wishing," said the vicar; "I must get on. Your young people—Miss Shadwell, I mean, and her governess—are drinking tea with my sister. Good-evening."

Shadwell stood up and waved his hand to the vicar's valediction, and the vicar smiled his cold smile and nodded, and his swift and wiry walk soon carried him under the white-thorns and scattered ash-trees, through which the path descends. Mark Shadwell remained with his foot on the stone seat, smoking and looking after that disappearing figure.

"Good man—awfully conceited—curiously disagreeable. I wonder how he made love to Amy, long ago, when he was at her feet. I dare say he frightened that poor old fellow, Ford, today, half out of his wits, with his Beelzebub, and his hell, and his visitation of the sick. How these poor little prigs do delight in frightening people!"

It was a delightful, balmy twilight, and Mark Shadwell was in no mood to return to Raby for a little time, so he smoked on, and the bats came out from their ivied nooks in the walls of Wynderfel, and the stars began to glimmer in the deepening sky.

CHAPTER XIII.

BONNIE AND BABY.

As the Reverend Stour Temple said, the young ladies of Rabey were that evening drinking tea at the vicar's house.

In the pretty country about Wynderfel, there are few prettier things than the vicar's house, which is old and lonely, standing among dark elm-trees, on a gentle eminence, built of time-worn white stone, with a flight of broad white steps leading up to the fluted door-way. In front, spreads a little carpet of short grass

pleasantly relieved by clusters of roses and sweet-briers, and several small beds of brilliant flowers. A tall double hedgerow marks the line of the narrow road in front, from which you can see, peeping among the old trees and underwood, the arched gate-way of the farm-yard, and the smaller arch of a little, belfry and the pigeons are often seen fluttering and wheeling in the air, above the dove-cote, and the great dog, Drake, lying before the steps, on summer days, blinking and dozing, and snapping lazily at the flies.

Stour Temple, the vicar, is the master of this dwelling of rural quiet—that is to say, he pays the bills, but exercises little other lordship, leaving the government pretty nearly altogether in the hands of his dear maiden sister, Barbara, who takes into council her brother, the vicar's senior by four years, beloved of both, though seen with different eyes.

This brother is Roger S. Temple, and as unlike as may be to the slim dark vicar. I am going, young ladies, to describe a fellow, by no means handsome, who, nevertheless, from some celestial qualities, has always seemed to me almost beautiful. He violates all the canons of your heroic statuary, as you shall see, if you read on a little. But, on the whole, knowing that in age, ways, and form, he is likely to fall under your displeasure, I would advise your looking another way, and passing by what concerns him. Happy am I to be able to write of him in the present tense still, and yet to know that these lines will never meet his honest eye, or wound his innocent soul, for he reads no books but those half-dozen samples of the old sentimental novels, which his sister, Miss Barbara, keeps in her book-case, and these so much at his leisure, that by the time he reads "finis" in the last, he is ready with a fresh interest for the title-page of the first. He is fat, and round, and high-shouldered—clumsy, I must allow—no longer an athlete, and when, for instance, he ran after his hat, on the stormy day in October last, suffered more, and was longer in recovering, than he ever divulged. His face is the kindliest, though homeliest, in the world. It is a fat and expansive countenance, somewhat brown; there is not an angle in it, anywhere. He has no mustache or beard. His lips and chin are shorn and bluish, with a fat kind dimple here and there. Hs is somewhat bald too; a baldness not glaring and complete, a little softened and downy, and those remnants of what was once crisp black hair at the sides and back are grizzled, and now very much dashed with white. Round little light-blue eyes, as innocent as they were in the cradle, are his, with next to no eyebrows over them. At a cricket-match, thirty years ago, some of his upper teeth were smashed, and time has, somewhat prematurely, removed the rest, which, to his kindly smile, gives an infantine character, though some people, when he smiles, fancy rather that he looks like a fond old nurse, charmed with the prattle or the gambols of the children toddling about her chair.

Every one likes Roger Temple. He never said an ill word, because he never harbored an ungentle thought of mortal. He is no more conscious than his sister Barbara, who actually thinks him still young, as well as beautiful, that the dew of his youth has quite evaporated, and that it is now drawing toward evening with him. He is soft-hearted and romantic, and, but for his shyness and certain panics that come over him, would have been, no doubt, married long ago.

As it was nearly sunset, and tea early, Miss Barbara was by this time standing at the drawing-room window, which commands a view of the hollow, now glittering its last in the golden evening sun, through which lies the path from Wynderfel.

"I don't see a sign of them, do you, Bonnie?" This was an ancient, pet name of my friend Roger. "Oh! he's gone," she said, looking round, "perhaps to meet them—but no, poor darling, he's so shy."

So she looked out again for a time, and then compared her watch with the old French clock over the chimney-piece. It was hardly time yet; but fatiguing as it is, few people can, especially in the rural solitudes, where an arrival is an event, and from a window with a distant view of the hoped-for approach, refrain from watching.

Miss Barbara, whose fingers were tired holding her golden glasses to her eyes, with a little sigh, put them down and turned from the pretty view, and sat down at the piano.

It is an instrument which has seen better days, like the good lady who loves it. It has an old-world air, and its ivory notes have got a mellow golden tint, and are hallowed with a wonderfully long course of Mozart and Handel, and variations interminable, garrulous, circumlocutory, and mazy enough to have unsettled its wits. The little oval landscape over the notes has lost its youthful complexion, and acquired an antique melancholy tint; the varnish has cracked into all manner of tiny wrinkles, and if you strike a loud chord, and listen, you hear the whole instrument audibly wheeze after the effort.

But to her it is a peerless piano, beloved with the sad yearnings of irrevocable youth; on any other the old music would lose its life and charm; forms gather round it as she plays, and when she ceases, remembered tones murmur in her ear. Maiden sister Barbara had many offers, and might have been well married; but there was one that was not to be. The same music-stool, the same little oval landscape, the same music, the same instrument, and its reeky chords and faded harmonies, as her thin hand calls them forth in the summer evenings, sound sad and sweet in her ear, as choirs of far-off angels.

When she had played for a while, up got Miss Barbara again, and walked down the hall-door steps and to the little grass-mound, about a stone's throw to the left, on which she took her stand. The big dog, Drake, got up and shook his ears, and followed her lazily to the point of observation, whence, sitting with cocked ears and sniffing nostrils, he made his official survey also; and flanked on the other side by the splendid old lime-tree that overshadowed them, Miss Barbara, with her golden glasses to her eyes, looked out earnestly for her guests.

"Oh! you're there!" exclaimed Roger's kindly voice, approaching, and turning she saw him with his smile drawing near at a little trot, which subsided to a walk. "I've been talking to Dolly in the poultry-yard," he resumed, as he arrived, a little out of breath, upon the eminence, where Miss Barbara received him with her most attentive

look, for he had plainly something to tell, and Drake fidgeted in his place and looked on him kindly, and licked his lips with just the least little tip of his tongue, and brushed the grass back and forward with his tail as he sat, indicating his willingness to give up his place and kiss hands, and make himself generally agreeable, if it were thought desirable. Roger's countenance darkened with the sad and earnest expression which it always wore when business was approached, and helaid his hand gently on his sister's wrist—"I've just been looking at the two turkeys, Baby dear, and I really think it looks ve-y like pip."

"Really?" echoed Miss Barbara.

"I do, indeed, upon my word!"

"Poor thing!" exclaimed she; and they looked gravely into one another's eyes.

Roger shook his head, closed his eyes, and with a little sigh, said—

"It's a nasty thing, *pip*."

"Awful!" said Miss Barbara.

"I can find nothing wrong in their food; I really, Baby, can't account for it, and I've told Dolly what she ought to do, and she's very careful, you know, and as the food is all right, I hope the others mayn't take it."

"I trust not; and sufficient to the day, Bonnie dear," she replied, brightening up, for she remembered her guests, and she glanced over his wardrobe with approval.

"How handsome you look this evening, Bonnie!" exclaimed his sister, looking at him with a proud smile of affection.

"You must not say that, Baby dear; no, you mustn't, you make me too conceited; no, Baby, you mustn't," replied he, shaking his head and smiling violently.

"I *want* you to look well to-night, and you know why?" she said, with a smile and a nod.

"You're always quizzing, Baby; there's *nothing*, I assure you," laughed Roger, rather sheepishly; "now, really, upon my honor!"

"You want but this, and you're perfect," and she placed a rosebud in his button-hole.

"Thank you, Baby dear," he said, with a smile, patting her cheek very gently, "you're always so pleasant;" and he kissed her cheek fondly. "But, really, and upon my honor—well, you won't believe me, you never will, Baby, you're such a rogue."

"By the bye, where's Charlie?" inquired Miss Barbara, suddenly recollecting.

"Gone to fish, I think; he took my rod and flies; but he knows you expect friends, and he's sure to be at home in time."

"Yes, I'm sure he will, he *wouldn't* disappoint us; and I want him and Rachel to see one another; it's more than three years since they met last," said Barbara, who was addicted to that romantic school of match-making which makes no account of prudence, and had this evening two affairs on her hands—one, the little project she had just suggested; the other, a romance which she had imagined, in which Agnes Marlyn, all unconsciously, and honest Roger Temple, willingly enough, figured as partners.

"Sure never a hall such a galliard did grace!"

It was these romantic situations which quickened her hospitable instincts this evening, and her gentle soul yearned to see them all happy together.

"Here they are, at last!" exclaimed she, joyfully. "Run down, Bonnie, and meet them; fly, darling, and I will go in and ring for tea, and have every thing ready by the time you arrive."

With a throbbing heart honest Roger Temple, at that odd little jog-trot which constituted his mode of "flying," set forth, and not caring to be unbecomingly blown at his arrival, he subsided, as usual, into a walk, and so smiling gloriously, he approached the two young ladies who were drawing near.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHARLIE MORDANT.

THEIR cheerful welcome over—

"My dear," said Miss Barbara to Rachel, "I'm so glad I've got you here; it was so good of you and Miss Marlyn to come! I told you in my note I had an old friend to meet you; it isn't Bonnie, of course you understood *that*. It's—*shall* I tell you? Who do you suppose? It's Charlie Mordant: yes, indeed, came on leave yesterday morning. He'd have gone up to pay his respects at Raby, but I wasn't quite sure whether your papa would wish it. His father—I think there was some unpleasantness—was not a favorite of Mr. Shadwell's; and then Sir Roke Wycherly being his guardian, or patron, or whatever it is, I fancied would not be a recommendation, as I know there had been a coldness there too, and I thought it better we should wait a little and feel our way."

"I really don't know, I think, I'm sure papa would have been very happy, and I *know* mamma would. We had such a charming walk here, every thing looking so beautiful, and we stopped for ever so long, did not we, Agnes, at the stile? We admire this pretty place; it looks so wonderfully, just in these tints, and in the sunset light! If we had brought our pencils and colors we should certainly have stopped there, and made sketches."

"And spoiled our tea, wicked creatures! But it *is* pretty, certainly, quite *beautiful* from some points of view," acquiesced Miss Barbara. "I'm very glad Miss Marlyn saw it to so much advantage. Bonnie darling, show Miss Marlyn the photographs."

My fat friend skipped to get the book, and placed it before the object of his admiration, and forthwith the ladies began to discuss the "photos" with animation,

"Bonnie dear, you must find my microscopic photo, you know the one I mean," said Miss Barbara, eagerly. "Yes, thanks; now, here it is, Miss Marlyn; look at it. I'll give you the magnifier presently. Now, examine it closely; is it a human being, or is it a building, or is it the Ten Commandments, or is it a cow?"

If Miss Marlyn had seen how conscious my fat friend, Roger, looked, she would have had an inkling of the truth, but she was politely scrutinizing the atom.

"Oh no!" cried Miss Barbara, "don't turn the back; you shall read that afterward: do you make out any thing?"

"It is so wonderfully minute," said Miss Marlyn, with a pretty frown of puzzle.

"Well, do you give it up?" cried Miss Barbara, with a delighted little signal to Bonnie.

"It looks a little like—is it?—a light-house, with the lower part dark, in deep shade, and the upper lighted; *is* it a light-house?"

"Well, what shall I say? It answers some of the purposes of a lighthouse; *I've* found it so, at least; it guides people in uncertainty, and it's a very fine object, *I* think, and it is luminous, and looks bright, always; a lofty, symmetrical structure."

"It can't be a statue, then?" conjectured Agnes.

"Or a water-spout?" suggested Rachel, who was now peeping over Miss Marlyn's shoulder.

"No! it isn't a water-spout; it's nothing so uncertain, nor a statue, though it might make a very fine one, *I* think," answered Miss Barbara.

"It would make a statue! then it is a block of white marble, *I* guess, with the lower part in shade," said Rachel.

Roger moved a little, uneasily.

"Well, that's your guess; and what do *you* say, Miss Marlyn? you must fix on something—*any thing*, just for a guess," said Miss Barbara.

"Give her the glass, Baby darling," murmured Roger, who was in a painful state of bashful excitement, and wished the ordeal over.

"I'll tell you what I think it is," said Miss Marlyn, in this sudden light, forgetting her data, "it's Kemble as Hamlet; the picture in the National Gallery, with the skull. I fell in love with it!"

Here Roger changed color a little, and cleared his voice, as if about to say something.

"Not a word, Bonnie, for your life!" entreated his sister.

"Well, that's *your* guess, an auspicious guess," said Miss Barbara, who had been rubbing the little lens in her handkerchief, and now placed it in Agnes Marlyn's taper fingers.

The young lady took it, applied it, and beheld honest Roger, looking more than commonly fat, in evening costume, with a white waistcoat, and smiling with all his might full in her face. An incredulous little shock for a moment expressed itself in Miss Marlyn's countenance, and then came an irrepressible fit of laughter.

"It's a horrid thing," said poor Bonnie, smiling plaintively. "I know you think it frightful."

"Tell me, dear Miss Marlyn, what amuses you so much?" inquired Miss Temple, a little anxiously.

"Thinking of our absurd guesses—a lighthouse, a water-spout, a skull in Hamlet's hand—how dreary and awful! and now it turns out to be something so cheerful and happy," replied Miss Marlyn; and then added in a sad tone, leaning back in her chair, so that Bonnie only could catch the murmured accents—"so very cheerful and happy, that sad people wonder how it *can* be so! Don't you think, Mr. Temple, that people who are always tolerably happy, are a sort of blessed monsters, who have reason to be thankful to heaven, above all others?"

"Yes, indeed!" said honest Roger, affecting a little sigh.

"Then *you* suffer—you—who seemed to me so light-hearted. You, also, have your secret griefs, like others?"

I am afraid that Miss Marlyn was quizzing him. And Roger, who was one of the serenest and cheeriest of mortals, was led into a silent prevarication, for the good fellow, for a moment, tried to look miserable, and sighed again. But what was he to do? Misery seemed to interest Miss Marlyn, and could he forfeit his chance?

"And what are these initials?" asked Miss Marlyn, changing the subject suddenly, and looking on the back of the photograph—"R. S. T.; they are yours, are they?"

"Yes, *Roger*—Roger Temple is my name!" said he, with an indescribable softness.

"*Roger?*" she repeated; "I thought it was *Bonaparte!* I've certainly heard your sister call you Bonaparte, haven't I?" said Miss Marlyn, cruelly, I am afraid.

"Oh! I think it must have been Bonnie," said honest Roger, with an ingenuous blush; "an old pet—I mean *nick*—name that she is fond of. *I* call *her* Baby, still; I do, indeed!"

"Then you were children together?" said the young lady, much interested.

"Yes, indeed; playmates in the nursery," said Roger, with a sigh, and a smile of innocent sentiment, and his head a little on one side, as people sometimes incline their heads in such fond retrospects.

"Our maid, long ago, used to call Bonaparte, *Bony*, and I suppose it was *that*, but I really was quite sure I had heard your sister call you Bonaparte!"

"What about *me?*" inquired Miss Temple.

"Only a mistake of mine. I've been asking the meaning of these initials, and now I know the 'R' and the 'T,' of course; but what does the 'S' mean?" asked Miss Marlyn, innocently.

"*Segrave*," said Miss Baby, shortly, and looked very grave.

Roger dropped his eyes, and coughed, and flushed a little, uneasily; and a momentary silence overtook the party.

I only know that, in the baptismal registry, "R. S." is expounded to mean "Roger Sidebotham." The calling these names to a helpless infant was, in this case, no wanton cruelty. The old original Roger Sidebotham was a bachelor, a City personage, and East India director, who obtruded himself as poor Bonnie's godfather, and accompanied the proffer of his spiritual parentage with some mysterious intimations of an intoxicating character.

But he married; and compensated his godson with a cadetship in the Company's service. The dream of a million was gone, but the brand of "Sidebotham" clave to him like the leprosy of Naaman the Syrian. It galled him. He hated it. It was one of the very few bitter drops in that pleasant sillabub which filled his cup of life. It certainly is not a pretty name. But he had brooded over it, and grown morbid, and had come to abhor and dread it as a spirit does the cabalistic word that has power to degrade and torture.

It was some relief to him when his sister Barbara, in her indignation, insisted that he should never sign himself "Sidebotham" more, but take instead the name of his admirable uncle, Segrave, who had left him a rent-charge of twenty pounds a year.

Still "Sidebotham" weighed upon him like an evil secret, which, sooner or later, time would bring to light: and thus it was he winced and

colored under Miss Marlyn's harmless but cruel question.

"Segrave is the second name," repeated Miss Barbara, who could not endure to leave her little speech, even for a moment, in the attitude of an untruth: "that is, *at present;* formerly, I mean originally, it was different."

"Oh!" said Miss Marlyn, turning again with a gentle interest to Roger Temple. "And what, then, does the initial 'S' really mean?"

Miss Marlyn's question, I have sometimes thought, was pressed with a cruel knowledge of facts.

"Don't ask, Miss Marlyn—pray don't!" said honest Roger, very much flurried, and, dropping his voice to the tenderest murmur, he continued, "I *must*, if you *desire* it: I can refuse you nothing: but you won't; I can't describe how it would pain me, I hate the name so much; and I know the effect that names have in prejudicing people. I've felt it myself; I know it; I *have* felt it myself; and I know, if you were to hate it as much as I do, you would always associate *me* with it: it is such a shabby, odious name. Side—"

He was as near as possible letting it slip out, and looked at her now with his round, innocent eyes in such woful terror that, in spite of her efforts, she did laugh a tremulous little laugh.

"I don't understand you, Mr. Temple. What *can* you mean by that, and looking at me with such an expression. You *have really* excited my curiosity, and I *must* know what you mean—*really*."

"Ah! no, Miss Marlyn—*pray*, don't!"

Just at that moment, to his indescribable relief, an interruption occurred, by the entrance of a tall, handsome young man, of a frank and animated countenance.

Miss Barbara had announced his step in the hall, with a sudden smile, and—

"Here comes Charlie!" and, as he entered, "*At last!* Charlie, at last!"

"I'm awfully late, I'm afraid; but it really isn't my fault. The boy *you* sent with me, Roger, brought me such a round! We had never been there before. I really thought we never should have got home again. I don't know which blundered most. Nobody could have told which of us was the guide."

The end of his sentence he spoke a little slowly, for his eyes had wandered to Miss Marlyn, and from her to Rachel; and looking still at her, with eyes that lighted up suddenly, he asked, in a low tone—

"Is not that Rachel Shadwell?"

The young man was instantly at her side as she stood by the piano, that wonderful relic of Miss Barbara's youth, where she had been turning over a volume of quaint Arcadian songs, full of Daphne and Chloe, and flight and pursuit, and pipes and echo, such as were sung a generation before Barbara Temple, though, in her old-fashioned childhood, she had learned to trill them.

"I'm *so* delighted: I had not an idea!" said he, a swarthy glow on his handsome face answering the brilliant blush of the girl, who was smiling very merrily, and, holding her pretty hand, he continued, looking in her beautiful blue eyes—

"You do look so—well, Rachel, and you've grown so tall;—I'm so glad you're here!"

"I *thought* it would be a surprise—ha, ha!" said Miss Barbara, gleefully, "and to *some* one"—with a very arch glance at Charlie—"a rather pleasant one! *Has* not she grown very much?—she's just the nicest height in the world—taller than *I*, I'm quite certain!"

"Oh no!" disclaimed Rachel, who, whatever she might think, was obliged to disavow that presumption.

"You *have*," said the young man, in very low tones. "I could hardly believe it; and I think just that height is so beautiful!"

"I should be more obliged," she said laughing, "if Miss Temple had not just paid me that pretty compliment." Indeed, could any thing have been prettier than the round and slender figure of the girl, as she leaned on the old piano, that had played in its day so much music for the young?

"How pretty they look together!" whispered Miss Barbara in the ear of her brother Roger. "But *I* know two who would make a still prettier couple—in *my* mind," she added, with a fond little laugh and a tiny tap on his sunburnt cheek. And honest Roger, smiling with bashful delight, kissed his sister's cheek stealthily, whispering in her ear, "Now, *don't;* you mustn't quiz me, Baby."

It was in my mind a delightful craze that kept these people young. I have seen conscientious people slyly trying to un-deceive others into mortification, and to rob them logically of their blessed mistakes—forgetting what a mysterious world it is, and how much of our enjoyments depend upon illusion. Let then that tenderest love that is a little blind linger still within the sacred walls of home; and cherish the absurd but beautiful mistakes that exercise the kindly admirations, and celestial affections, and unconscious gratitudes that make its spell remembered in distance, and after the flight of years, like an early gleam of Paradise.

Good, active housewife, kindly Barbara, of the wheezy piano and loving dreams, what a good mission is thine! What would thy brothers be without thee—resenting every thing for *them*, nothing for thyself? Though Stour Temple laughs, I think it pleases him that the person who places his slippers at the study fire, and pours out his tea, believes implicitly that he ought to be Archbishop of Canterbury—believes always what an unjust outer world it is, and shakes her head, and musters her powers of patience, when she remembers that her high-spirited, gifted, handsome brother Roger has returned from India without a fortune, or a title, or even a colonelcy.

He was a failure; but was he ever allowed to feel or even to perceive it? Stour Temple, also, with faculties, and reading, and energy, was here a castaway, upon a desolate strand, and growing old; but was not the sunshine of the same admiration making the air about him cheerful and warm? Oh! beautiful hallucinations of woman's affections, utterly wild and unjust, sweet as angel's consolations, balm of our wounded self-complacency, still seeing a beauty and youth under the hollow mask of years, and still predicting good times to come, after the game is quite lost and over, and harboring a delightful confidence in the talents that are nowhere. How many a wounded wayfarer by the bleak

paths of life would break his heart and die were it not for thy misplaced admiration, thine inextinguishable enthusiasm and cheerful mercy, pouring in ever the oil of an unconscious flattery, and the wine of hope!

CHAPTER XV.

GOOD-NIGHT.

"I WAS going to say I should not have known you, Rachel," said Charlie Mordant; "but I can't say that, for I think I should know you anywhere and almost at any distance—ever so far away. But it is nearly two years since I saw you, and you have grown so tall, and yet you are little Rachel Shadwell still—the same, yet not the same, but always the same to me, and I know I'm talking nonsense; but I know what I mean, though I see you are laughing at me." He smiled, and was speaking very low.

"*Was* I laughing?" said the pretty girl, who was leaning lightly on the ancient grand piano. "I always laugh when a sentence gets entangled—particularly a fine one. So perhaps I did laugh, though I really wasn't conscious."

"You never said—well, no matter," he began, and she saw him glance quickly round, and, being satisfied that their little talk was not overheard, he resumed, "and you never said you were glad to see me. Very ill-natured of you, I think, considering what old friends we are, and that I've been half-way over the world since I saw you; isn't it?"

"Why, yes, of course I'm glad to see you."

"It's very odd what a pleasure you take—I don't mean *you*, in particular, but *all* of you—in bewildering and mocking us men. I never know when you're in earnest. You're so awfully insincere, and take such a delight in it. What *can* be the pleasure of it? It *is* so odd!"

"If one's known to be insincere, one's incapable of deceiving any more, and nobody has any right to complain, don't you *see?*" urged Rachel, ingeniously.

"Well, I'm not good at arguing, but I know this: I wish you'd honestly say you're glad to see me, for I'm awfully glad to see you."

"Yes, honestly, I *am* glad to see you."

"Well, that would be very pleasant if you did not laugh while you say it; but no matter, I'm very glad to see *you*. I've been nearly two days here, and I assure you it has seemed like two months, for Miss Temple would not allow me to go to Raby to see you and Mrs. Shadwell. I don't pretend to say why, but you know if she wasn't a little fanciful and peremptory sometimes, she would be too perfect. She's the dearest old woman in the whole world, and I forgive her all she has made me suffer; but *she* would not allow me to pay my respects, either, and here I've been pining, and now comes this little compensation, and I'm so happy! And I could not have believed you could have grown so much; you are quite a tall girl, Rachel, and so—so *very*—but you were always pretty—*lovely*, I think, and as saucy as ever."

Rachel laughed again at this plain-spoken compliment.

"*I've* grown so awfully brown—like a gipsy, almost. I suppose you didn't know me when I came in?" said he.

"Oh yes; I should have known you perfectly, but great arrivals are always proclaimed beforehand, and Miss Temple took care to tell us all who was coming when we heard you knocking the hats and sticks about in the hall."

"You'll soon be a young lady of the world, Rachel; you'll be coming out and all that. I suppose you'll go to the hunt ball this year, won't you?" he asked.

"I don't suppose I shall; I don't know really. Papa does not like our neighbors, I think; he lives so entirely to himself, quite shut up, but *you* know—"

"Yes, I *know*. What lots of people he does hate, to be sure! That is, I mean, you know, I don't think he likes any of the county people. I remember very well how he used to avoid them two years ago, before I went away, and I know some of them did not like him; and so, I suppose, he's as solitary as ever. How awfully slow you must find it at Raby!"

"My aunt Pleydel wrote to mamma offering to take me out next year, if she would let me go to her."

"Oh yes; *she's* in the centre of all that; isn't she?"

"Yes, I believe so; but I don't think I should like it. I don't think I could endure that kind of life."

"A country miss, is that it? But you'll find you'll get into it wonderfully; you all do when you have the opportunity. I hear you are going to have a visitor at Raby."

"Oh yes! Sir Roke Wycherly."

"He's my guardian, you know."

"No, I didn't know."

"I dare say he forgets it himself; though, no, he can hardly do that, for he signs the checks twice a year for my annuity. I shan't be of age, you know, till I'm five-and-twenty, and *then* I succeed to—*nothing!*" and Charles Mordant laughed as cheerfully as if "nothing" meant ten thousand a year. "When my second horse broke his leg in India, I assure you I really don't know what I should have done, if it hadn't been for that capital fellow over there," and he nodded very kindly toward Roger, who was talking some very soft nonsense to Miss Marlyn. "I met two or three fellows that knew him in India—by Jove, how they *did* speak of him! I never heard a fellow so praised; they all *loved* him. There was a poor fellow with a young wife who got into a scrape—put his name on bills or something for a fellow, and was let in for five hundred pounds, and would have had to sell out if Roger there had not pulled him through—he's an awfully nice fellow, though he's such a guy. I wish Sir Roke was half as nice, but they say he's an awful old scamp."

"Sir Roke Wycherly!"

"Oh yes; there are all sorts of stories about him. They say he killed an opera dancer in one of his tempers at Paris."

"Oh, come! you don't believe *that?*"

"Well, no, I don't, *perhaps*. But, anyhow, it shows what a devil a fellow must be when things of that kind are seriously whispered about him. *Do* look at Roger—he's *awfully* gone about that girl—very pretty she is—Miss Marlyn—isn't that her name?"

"Yes; Agnes Marlyn. I think her perfectly lovely, and she is such a sweet girl—charming!" said Rachel.

"So Roger seems to think. What a muff he is! The best fellow in the world; but he *is* a muff, and I think I should not like him half so well, by Jove, if he *wasn't* a muff," said Charlie, who was watching with an amused interest the progress of his wooing, in which he smirked and blushed like a school-boy.

"She looks attentive, doesn't she? and she makes play with her eyes. Very fine eyes she has got, by Jove! He's making an impression; I *swear* to you he is."

"I'm glad you think so," she laughed. "He couldn't do better, and if Agnes *is* to marry, I should be so glad she was settled so near us."

"Look at him—*do* look at him! He's so bashful and enamored; it is quite delightful!" said Mordant. "What fun that girl's having! she's greening poor Roger so awfully—I mean, making such a fool of him."

"Oh, do you think so?" dissented Rachel.

"*Think!* To be *sure* she is."

"You don't know her; that is the reason you say so."

Charlie laughed.

So that evening his romance was prospering with honest Roger. The *purpureum lumen* of his youth glowed round about him in a Tyrian halo. The seven ages of man to him were a myth. He had stopped short at the third, where youth indites verses and sighs like a furnace. No man was ever more unconscious of his years. Like the good monk in the old legend, who followed the song of the celestial bird, from bush to brake, from hillock to running stream, over bosky uplands and through rocky glens—led on by its warblings from hour to hour, till the day was past and sunset came, and, returning to the convent door, found that fifty years had flown, and his life was over—so our friend, beguiled by the music of a wonderfully happy and loving soul, went unsuspecting and sweetly cheated on and on, and the flight of his years seemed to him but as an hour. And old age, when it overtakes him, will lead him by a flowery path to the grave, still incredulous.

And, now the hour of leave-taking had come, gay and kindly voices, and kisses often exchanged in the hall with Miss Barbara, and a lawful consignment of the young wayfarers to the time-honored escort of honest Roger Temple, and of his subaltern, Charlie Mordant, succeeded one another, and away went that pleasant party on their moonlighted way to Raby.

CHAPTER XVI.

A MEETING AT WYNDERFEL.

THREE stories high in the roofless wall of Wynderfel is the stone-shafted window from which hangs, like a beckoning arm, a tendril of ivy. Over that window-stone a poor Lady Alice, ever so many years ago, threw herself, or was thrown—dreadful, whichever way. It is still pointed out, and called the Lady's Window. You can see the quiet stars through the stone-framing in which, once, like a ghost, that unspeakable agony stood for a while, and vanished with a shriek. It is something of a Cumnor Hall story.

Mark Shadwell, the philosopher, was entering into the spirit of his bivouac on the limestone block, under the walls of Wynderfel. He swallowed the thimbleful of brandy that was left in his flask, and lighted a third cigar; and admired the thin film of silver that the moon was throwing over the singular landscape.

The philosopher was looking up at the Lady's Window, thinking idly of poor Lady Alice. "A devilish fine girl, I dare say!" And conjecturing what her style might have been—dark or blonde, with blue eyes or brown—and thinking what he would have done had he been the cavalier who used to bribe the porter, and enter the court-yard by night; and he lowered his eyes to the empty arch in which that ill-starred lover had stood so long ago, and he saw the figure of a horseman standing in it motionless and black against the moonlight.

Up rose Mark Shadwell, grasping the barrel of his gun hard in his hand, and called "Hallo!" rather fiercely.

"Ha!" cried the horseman; and there ensued a little silence,

"I say, who are *you?*" challenged the stoic.

"Ho!—Ah!—dear! Mr. Shadwell? So it is!" exclaimed the voice of Carmel Sherlock.

"And what the devil brings *you* here?" answered his patron.

"Returning from the mills, sir. All right—every thing," answered Carmel, in his odd, gentle way.

"Why, this isn't your way—unless you mean to ride over the stile—is it?" replied Shadwell, tartly.

"Near—only near—not quite, sir; but I longed to see Wynderfel. I could not refrain. I hope it is no harm. I longed to see Wynderfel once more," replied Carmel Sherlock. "Should you like to ride home? You'll find the horse quite fresh. Will you take him?"

"No, thanks; you'd better get home yourself. You're always turning up in out-of-the-way places. By Jove! in the days of Wynderfel they'd have taken you for a warlock, and burnt you some fine morning. You never do any thing like any one else. What the devil's the good of being so queer?"

"Queer! am I, sir? Well, I dare say; but I only wanted to look at the old house. I've been dreaming such odd dreams about the Lady's Window, and all sorts of faces, so confused. I wished to look at the place again to try and understand them, and what it all may mean."

"Well, if I were you, I'd come down in the day-light, or get my bed down here, and sleep, if you like it better. Capital place for dreaming dreams and seeing visions; but just for to-night, I'd get home and have some supper."

Carmel Sherlock had dismounted as Shadwell spoke these jeering words, and led his horse across the intervening space.

"I know Sir Roke Wycherly's face, sir. I saw him once when I was at Sidney, at Cambridge. I wish I did not dream at all, or could remember my dreams clearly. *His* face is always there, and there was something last night I saw about the Lady's Window up there," he pointed with his finger at it; "something, but

I can't recollect it—I *can't*. Only *he* was there, and you, sir—you *were*, my God! climbing with a body like a black monkey's, and your own face."

"Ah! thank you," said Mark Shadwell, with a nod.

"I hate them. It was quite clear the whole thing as I dreamed it; but it all went to pieces as I awoke. I'd give an eye or a hand, sir, almost, could I gather it up again, for I know it's true, whatever it was, and I understood it quite—true and dreadful, sir. My face and forehead and hair were all wet, and I cold as death when I wakened. It's worth knowing, if I *could but remember* it!"

His fingers were laid on Mark Shadwell's arm as he whispered this, and his pale countenance and large eyes gazed into his face with a near and frightened scrutiny, as if imploring a hint or a conjecture.

"What the devil are you afraid of?" asked Shadwell, with a laugh that sounded oddly in his own ears. "Dreams, indeed! Pretty stuff! D— me, I often wonder you don't set up for a fortune-teller, or a prophet, or a new Evangelist. Pity to put your candle under a bushel when you might make such a good thing of it."

"I thought, perhaps, I might recover it if I looked at this place; but no, no, I can't find the clue; these voices in the air, sir, if you don't write down what they say while it's in your ear, you lose it. You may as well follow the wind or try to paint the clouds of last year; it's all gone. But oh, sir, I *wish* he wasn't coming!"

"Yes, *Wycherly*, it's very alarming, isn't it?" acquiesced Shadwell, with one of his ironies, as he watched the smoke which he had just blown from his lips dispersing.

"Sir Roke Wycherly, baronet," resumed Sherlock. "Yes, it's bad—it *is* bad; there's something *bad* about it, sir, his coming here. I fear him—I misdoubt him, I do—I *fear* him," murmured Carmel Sherlock, looking up at Lady Alice's window, and through it at the stars in the deep sky; "I can't win it back, anyway; it won't come: it's enough to make a man mad."

"Quite enough. I don't wonder you're so much afraid of Wycherly; he *is* such a formidable fellow, with his asthma, and his dyspepsia, and his drops, and his caudle—enough to frighten a giant, by Jove!" observed Mr. Shadwell, getting up. "You may as well get home, and I'll talk to you by and by."

"The horse?" said Carmel, again offering the bridle to his patron.

"No, I'll walk, I tell you—I'd *rather*," he said; and Carmel Sherlock, throwing first a dreamy look around him, and then looking down in thought upon the ground, led the horse away through the archway, and Shadwell soon heard the clink of his hoofs as he trotted briskly along the little by-road below the old walls of Wynderfel toward Raby Hall.

"That fellow will be stark mad some of these days; by Jove! he *is* mad! He'll be up in a mad-house so sure as I stand here. I wonder how long the poor devil will last before he breaks out!" muttered Shadwell, in that vein of soliloquy which was customary with him whenever he had just closed an interview with his eccentric assistant; and having settled this point with himself, as he did at least once every day, he watched the flight of a bat for a while, and had even a thought of shooting it, only he did not wish the trouble of loading. Then he reflected what a cross-grained world it was, and how he had been twice interrupted in that most unlikely spot, by which three persons seldom passed in a week, and then he began to think of Roke Wycherly.

"It's an odd thing, devilish odd—that fellow's always maundering about here, and dreaming and fancying some mischief is brewing; and I can't get the same thing, by Jove! out of *my* head either. And hang me if I can think of any mischief he can do me. What *can* he do to injure me? If he were thinking of a lawsuit, it could do him no earthly good coming down here. Inquiries — evidence — stuff! He's no such ass as to think he could do it. That's the work of some fellow bred to attorney business. Devil a thing can he do to hurt me by coming down here; and yet, ever since I opened his note, it seems to me that I've been as mad, by Jove! as Carmel Sherlock, almost. I feel there's some d—d mischief gathering, and I can neither shape nor prevent it."

With his gun over his shoulder, Mark Shadwell mounted the stile, intending to pursue the lonely walk to Raby. But at the summit of it he paused, looking over his shoulder, for he heard voices approaching from the other side of the smooth sward in front of Wynderfel.

Female voices sounded pleasantly in the dewy night air, and there were men's voices also. He guessed whose they were.

"Rachel, is that you?" he called. There was no answer. The talkers were absorbed in each other and themselves, and the merry voices and laughter still approached.

"Miss Agnes is there also," he commented, in an under-tone. "Pretty Miss Marlyn! what are *you* saying, I wonder? That's young Mordant, of course; yes, seeing them home. I wonder they didn't drive. Well, I'm not sorry; it will help to prevent me from thinking as I go."

So down he came from the stile, calling, "Rachel" again as he went; and soon, with an answer, the party of four came round the distant corner of the old building, and Mark Shadwell greeted them and joined in the walk homeward.

CHAPTER XVII.

A MOONLIT WALK—ANOTHER STEP.

THERE was a momentary chill and shadow as Mark Shadwell joined the party. The garrulous merriment subsided, and a short silence came, during which nothing was heard but the tread of their feet on the pathway.

Mark Shadwell inquired for Miss Temple—asked Charlie Mordant when he had come, and how long he was to stay—asked honest Roger how the cob he had bought at Raby did his work.

And with these questions and answers, the conversation flagged again, and the party walked on in silence.

"Five abreast is a little too much for this path, isn't it?" said Shadwell. "You shall lead. Go

n, Temple; you and Mordant take care of my daughter, and I'll take charge of Miss Marlyn."

And, in compliance with this order, his daughter and honest Roger, with a longing, lingering look and a great sigh, and young Mordant walked on, while he and Miss Marlyn fell a little behind.

Mark Shadwell strode on beside Miss Marlyn. He did not speak; a topic somehow did not turn up at once. He saw from the corners of his eyes her elegant figure moving beside him, with a little space between; he saw her features, too, clearly enough in the moonlight, and that she was looking straight before her, rather downward as she walked, and very gravely.

"Rather a damper, I'm afraid, my appearance just now? You were talking very merrily, I think, as you came round the corner of the old house there," said Mark Shadwell, after a little silence.

"Yes—that is, I believe we were," said Miss Marlyn.

"And what was all the fun about?" he inquired.

"I really forget, sir—" she hesitated.

"Now, you're *not* to be *sir*ing me, do you mind," he urged, in a low key. "I told you before that your poor father and I were very, *very* dear friends. If you want to vex me, of course I can't help it; but unless you do, you really *mustn't* treat me so very formally. I sometimes think, Miss Marlyn, that you are a very haughty young lady."

"Haughty!—really?" replied she.

"Yes, haughty," he repeated.

"We never know ourselves, I believe; but that does surprise me, Mr. Shadwell," she said, looking downward on the path before her; and Shadwell fancied he could, with his side glance, detect a trace of an enigmatic smile.

"They smile to themselves, when they think we're not looking; what are they dreaming of, I wonder, when they do it? It's very becoming," he thought.

"I tell you what, now—you know you're my secretary, and we are on confidential terms, and you must listen to me—and I do say, you are as haughty a little queen as ever swayed the sceptre of empire."

"You don't think so, sir?" said Miss Agnes Marlyn, very gravely.

"*There! sir* again! Well, no matter; I say I *do*. I'm quite serious. I'm a reader of faces and of character, and understand the psychology of gesture, and motion also, and I say that pride is your strength, and—weakness."

Miss Marlyn threw upon him in the moonlight another grave look of inquiry, which was, he thought, wonderfully handsome. He looked at her a little more directly and smiled; whereupon her brief gaze was averted again, her dark clouded eyes were lowered to the path before them, and he could see her long eyelashes; and he looked a little while in silence, and then he said—

"The reason—*one* reason—why I say you are so haughty, is this: that you keep me so at arm's length. All very well, of course, if I were a young jackanapes; but I'm not—I'm an old fellow."

There was no remark.

"Old enough, at all events, to have that daughter," and he nodded toward Rachel. "And, besides, even if I had never known or cared for your poor father—who, I've told you very often, was my most intimate and dear friend—I am, and I feel it, and I wish to Heaven you could understand it too—I am, in virtue of your position under my roof, your guardian. I'm not jesting; I'm perfectly serious. I consider you as my ward; and you'll see, should you ever need it, there's no trouble I should shrink from, no exertion I'm not ready to make in your behalf. I know it's easy to say all this, and not very likely, you'll think perhaps, that my services will ever be needed; but, by Jove! I mean what I say, and I wish they were, that I might prove it."

"You are too good, Mr. Shadwell," said she; and the low and very sweet notes in which these words were spoken, he fancied, touched him.

"Yes, you'll see it; I regard you as a second *daughter*—I do, I assure you."

Miss Marlyn made no answer.

"And, in some respects, you could fill a place in my confidence which a daughter can not," he said, in a very earnest, but a lower key.

Miss Marlyn looked at him for the first time quite direct, with a wondering and almost startled glance.

"I do not understand, sir," she said.

"No, of course—how should you?" said he. "But there are lots of things I *can't* talk to Rachel about, even if she had sense to make it worth the trouble, on account of her mother. Why, you look as if I was going to talk treason and blasphemy, whereas I was really only going to speak very sober good sense."

And saying this, Mr. Shadwell laughed a little, and paused for a reply; but Miss Agnes offered no remark, and looked down as before.

"What I mean is this—you see I'm talking quite frankly to you; as frankly, in fact, as I expect you always to speak to me—I say, what I mean is just this: there are subjects on which I can't talk to Rachel, just because they involve a discussion of her mother's prejudices and unreasonableness—and she has more than one woman's share of both, *I* can tell you—you'll understand better the sort of thing I mean by and by. You see, I mean to be outspoken, and hide nothing from my secretary; other fellows would mince the matter, and take a roundabout way of conveying their meaning; but with you, I go straight to the point. She's delicate, she's peevish, she's exacting."

"She's very kind to me, sir," said Miss Marlyn, sadly.

"Of course she's kind—of course she is; I'd like to see any one in my house treat you otherwise than kindly. But I mean, and you'll find it, she's no more good in the house than a picture, and she's a sort of worry besides; and she can't, she never could, enter into my feelings. I was an ambitious fellow—I had plans for life—I wasn't duller than other fellows who have got to the top of the wheel since—but she was all against it; such a drag, a dead weight, I never could move—all for a quiet life, and, by Jove! she has got it—ha, ha! If it hadn't been for her, I'd have been member for Halford twelve years ago; but she was in the way—a woman can knock those things on the head, you know. Now, Miss Agnes Marlyn, if you marry a fellow with any 'go' in him, and any brains, while you live, don't tether him down by the leg to a post

at the back of a rabbit warren, as you see me here."

This was a theme on which Mark Shadwell was more eloquent than exact. Perhaps his poor wife, in her ill-requited idolatry, *had* pleaded against his early maunderings about public life. But she had not had much of her own way in other matters; and I suspect that Mark's earnestness, or, at least, his opportunities, had not been quite so inviting or so strenuous as he chose to believe.

"I don't think, however, Miss Marlyn, that you are the kind of person who would want sympathy with a daring ambition."

For one moment Miss Marlyn glanced upon him a kindling look—something wild, fiery, admiring. It was like the last face seen in a dream as a man awakens, gone quite in a moment; for the young lady's look was again downcast, almost sad; but that wild, glad, momentary look haunted him—it was inspiring.

"She's wonderful!" he thought. "By Jove! a glance like the pythoness! She's a fine creature! There's no woman worth a fig that has not a vein of the tigress in her."

He walked beside her, quite silent again for a little way, and thought how handsome she looked. That look of strange admiration seemed burning in the darkening sky, on the grass, on the dark background of distant foliage—wherever he gazed.

"I say no one can get on alone—it is not meant; one's own applause won't carry you through—one must have sympathy. I might have been differently placed in the world now, if I had secured it," said Mark Shadwell, aloud; "and I can't tell you how much obliged I am for—well—for your consenting so good-humoredly to be bored with my confidences. You understand now what I mean? I wish I could requite your kindness any way. You can hardly estimate the extent of it, because you have never known what it is to be in a solitude like this, without a human being to talk to upon the very subjects that most interest you—and I'm a fellow that can't talk to reeds and purling streams—and you have no idea how a secret preys on one, like that animal, by Jove! the Spartan fellow hid under his robe, and that devoured his flesh while he concealed it."

Mark Shadwell talked as if he was immensely grateful. He felt, on the contrary, that he was conferring an immeasurable obligation. He was thinking how flattered the young lady must be by this graceful condescension of his confidence. He wished to please her. The philosopher may have suspected some little sentiment mingling in his good-will; and if there was, why should he not amuse himself a little? Heaven knew he meant no harm! he knew himself too, he hoped. Had he not outlived his follies? Of course it is pleasant to look at a beautiful girl, as you look at a flower or a picture. His statuesque admiration was very free from danger; he was not like the poor little woman who fell in love with the Apollo Belvedere.

They were now approaching the timber that groups high and dark about Raby Hall.

"And so," said he, "it is a bargain. In all your plans, and in all your *troubles*, whenever they come—and may Heaven avert them for many a day!—I'm to be your adviser and helper, to the extent of my poor power, do you see? and you, in return, are to listen to all my wretched secrets, and give me *your* advice—instinct is better than experience, it is always true—and we are to be true friends—real friends; and I shall keep no secrets from my secretary, and she's to make me her father-confessor: so that's agreed!"

And with these words, drawing nearer to her side, he took her hand and pressed it.

"It *is* agreed, isn't it?" he repeated in a lower key and more earnestly.

She laughed a little, and said "Yes;" and he thought she blushed as she laughed. Yes, she did blush: he was sure she blushed a little; and she did not draw away her hand, as Becky Sharp or Miss Jenny Bell might have done. There were none of their false pruderies—no leaven of the shark in Miss Marlyn. She was genuine.

That little blush was like the sparkle and flush of champagne in his veins and in his brain, as he went to his study that night.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A LETTER CONCERNING MISS MARLYN.

Mark Shadwell knew that Sir Roke Wycherly had a sly taste for satire, and he had no fancy to figure more amusingly than he could help in the pleasant stories he was sure to tell of his visit to Raby. With therefore as much activity as a proud man might, and with some grumbling and some sneering, he pushed on preparations for the reception of this kinsman, whom, as we know, he neither loved in his heart nor spared in his talk.

The evening after his moonlit walk, a letter reached him from Sir Roke. It terminated suspense as to the reality of his intentions, by fixing a day for his arrival.

He had begun to think that something had happened to change Sir Roke's plans. He had been better pleased than his pride would allow him to confess to any one, that there was a chance of escaping this visit altogether; and had the letter been one to tell him that on a certain day an execution would be in his house, it could hardly have left, for some minutes after its perusal, a more disagreeable impression.

"That mad fellow, Carmel, has made me as nervous as a sick old woman, with his croaking. That comes of living in a solitude, with no one but rabbits and women and madmen to talk to. What the devil *can* it signify whether Roke Wycherly comes, or no? He's not a ghost, or an evil spirit, or even a conjurer; a commonplace fellow, with nothing in him but money and selfishness. Well, he says he'll come—and so he will, and he'll go—and there's an end."

And thus framing his mental protest against the auguries of Carmel Sherlock, he rose from his chair, and thrust Sir Roke's letter into his pocket, with contempt in his countenance, and an odd misgiving at his heart.

There was among the letters on this occasion a French one, addressed, in a little round hand, and with very florid capitals, to "Madame Shadwell," which Mark took the liberty, without hesitation, of opening.

It was from the principal of the French school, and concerned Miss Marlyn.

"My secretary, by Jove! Let us see."

And thus saying, with an altered countenance, he drew near the window and read.

He now recollected that his wife's application to the mistress of the boarding-school, for information respecting the young lady's qualifications, had been only provisionally answered by a sort of deputy, who had spoken in the highest terms of her. Mark scanned this supplemental letter with a keen curiosity.

The principal of the establishment had been absent for some time, it seemed in consequence of ill health, at Vichy. She apologized for the long delay, and proceeded to answer Madame Shadwell's inquiries one by one.

It struck him that this letter was much colder, and more guarded, than that which had come from Madame de la Perriere's representative. With respect to intelligence and accomplishments, indeed, it spoke of her much in the same strain; but with regard to those moral qualities about which inquiry had been made, there was a kind of reserve that rather piqued than alarmed his curiosity. Madame de la Perriere had nothing to censure in the morals of Mademoiselle Agnes Marlyn, and, though she was still a very young person, she trusted that in her new situation she would be steady, and approve herself worthy of confidence.

As to whether Mademoiselle Agnes Marlyn was likely to grow weary of her present position in consequence of its solitude, she did not feel herself competent to pronounce. But for a person so young as mademoiselle, she thought a secluded place much more desirable than one of a different stamp, and would certainly advise no visiting or other relaxation of the rules of her residence in Madame Shadwell's house. And she thought that madame would find that the accustomed quietude of her daily life would conduce to the young lady's efficiency in her situation.

He read these passages several times over. He could detect nothing positive in them. Their tone, however, persuaded him that Miss Agnes had required a stiff rein while under Madame de la Perriere's authority.

"But then she says she has nothing to censure. The pretty rogue has been just wild enough to cause uneasiness, and there she was pulled up. I'll go into the school-room and talk to her a bit."

So resolved Mr. Shadwell, and entering that room, found Miss Marlyn alone at her desk.

The young lady rose as he entered, and laid down her pen.

"Dear me! what a reverential courtesy!" said he, laughing. "What has become of Rachel?"

"Mrs. Shadwell sent for her. Shall I call her?" said the young lady, with another little reverence, and moving toward the door.

"On no account," he replied. "I don't require to look at that great girl to be reminded how old I am, and I am not so often favored with a *tête-à-tête*, that I should wish to cut it short in a moment. Sir Roke Wycherly's coming. We are quite sure of him at last. He'll be here on Monday. That's my first bit of news; and the next is, I fear you were rather a wild little woman at school, for I've got a letter in my pocket that tells all sorts of fibs. It comes from Madame de la Perriere. I'll only tell you it's by no means so good as the note we had, eight weeks ago, from Mademoiselle du Chatelet. I'm telling you the truth, upon my honor; and I'll leave you till to-morrow to guess what's in it."

As he spoke mademoiselle blushed, and for a few seconds her color grew more and more intense, and then suddenly it waned. She became so pale that Mr. Shadwell half repented his jocular experiment. He could not tell whether she was nervous only, or angry, or very much frightened. Her eyes were fixed on his with a gaze that looked almost haggard.

"Come, you pretty little scape-grace, you must tell me honestly the entire history of your school adventures. Mind, I am your confessor—tell the whole truth, and upon my honor I'll give you absolution."

She dropped her eyes, and looked much more like herself.

"I may have enemies, sir—it is possible; but my conduct has been always irreproachable. If there be malice, I defy its worst. Madame de la Perriere can testify of my conduct if she will. It is terrible to have to assert of one's self those things which are taken for granted of all ladies. I am a child of calamity—an orphan—in some measure, always at the mercy of my employers; but powerless and unhappy as I am, I have yet some rights, and one of them is that of hearing distinctly whatsoever may have been urged by another to my prejudice. Only tell me what it is, and I pledge my life I refute it. Have I not, sir, a right to hear my accusation?"

"Why, see where you're running to, you little madcap! Who on earth talked of accusation? I assure you there is nothing of the kind," said Shadwell.

"You did, sir," replied the young lady, in a clear and rather bitter tone. "If you did not use the word accusation, you conveyed it. You said that falsehoods had been written of me."

"Did I? By Jove! I believe I did; but you might have guessed by my manner that I was not serious."

"I did not guess, sir," said the young lady.

"By Jove! she's awfully offended," thought Mark Shadwell, who had expected quite different relations to arise on this little conference. Miss Agnes Marlyn held the higher ground, and he was actually apologizing.

"Well, I'll tell you exactly the truth, and you'll see how mere a nothing it really is, and you mustn't be vexed with me, though it was very stupid jesting as I did. I *had* a letter from Madame de la Perriere, as I said, and I fancied it a little cold—that's all. I do assure you there is not a single story or complaint in the entire rigmarole; but there is what I said—it's *cold*, and for that reason I shan't mention it to a human being but yourself, and I'm sure you'll not be vexed with me for telling *you*?"

There was a little silence here.

"I knew you wouldn't—I knew it." He touched the back of her slender hand as he spoke; it was almost a caress.

"There now, she's a reasonable child. She's not going to be one of my troubles."

He raised her hand and pressed it for a moment. "We are good friends again, aren't we?" he said in a low tone.

"You are very good to me, Mr. Shadwell," she said, after a little pause; but I've just been thinking that I had better resign my situation here, and go elsewhere. May I say so to Mrs. Shadwell?"

"Why, what on earth can you mean? Go away? By Jove! wouldn't that measure be rather sharp and short?" said Mr. Shadwell, rather aghast.

"I am sure you did not mean to insult me, Mr. Shadwell, but it seems to me that your confidence in me has been shaken by that letter of Madame de la Perriere," said Miss Marlyn. "I know well what pain it will cost me to leave Raby; but suffering is not new to me."

The young lady spoke with a decision that alarmed Mark Shadwell.

"You'd hardly use me so ill as that," remonstrated he. "If I conveyed any thing like what you say, I'm very sorry, and *do* believe me, I never intended it. You must try me a little longer. It was very thoughtless of me to mention the letter. I remember when I used to care about what people said; I don't now. I've felt nervous myself when I thought stories were told of me—I mean lies, of course."

"Every one has enemies—very few have friends," said the young lady. "I lost my mother very young; when I lost my father, I was fourteen years old." Miss Agnes Marlyn was speaking as it were in a melancholy dream, and you would not have supposed that she was conscious of another person's presence. "Madame de la Perriere found herself in charge of an unfriended orphan. I have labored to requite her kindness. I have much more than repaid her. It is not her fault—she can not help it—that she can attach herself to none but people of rank or fortune. I have neither; of course she speaks coldly of me."

But I told you, that letter is our little secret, yours and mine—not a soul else shall ever hear of it; and I give you my honor I never for a moment attached the slightest importance to it. And I beg your pardon for having named it to you."

Miss Marlyn looked at him for a moment with eyes very grateful and humble, and said—

"You are too good to me, Mr. Shadwell."

"Don't say that *now*; make trial of me first, and *then* pronounce whether I wish to serve you," he answered in a low tone, and accompanied his words with that fierce and handsome smile which showed his small white teeth. Then he left the room, and Miss Marlyn looked for a moment sternly on the oak door through which he had passed, listening, and quickly shut and locked up the desk at which she had been writing.

Then standing with her finger to her lip, she listened for a while, and, having thought a little, she hurriedly re-opened her desk and tore up the letter she had only an hour ago elaborately written, and with a match set fire to the fragments on the hob, and saw the last spark out.

Notwithstanding the confidence she always professed in her Raby friends, this young lady's ways, I think, were cautious and secret.

CHAPTER XIX.

FIDDLE AND THUNDER.

A THUNDER-STORM that evening came down over the distant forest of Hazelden, over the old manor and woodlands of Wynderfel, and down the wild slopes and brakes of the neglected park of Raby. It was to the music of the distant thunder that Miss Marlyn, standing at the window of the school-room, read a very short note which had come with the other letters in the Raby post-bag from the village.

Whatever indecision she may have experienced about her other correspondence, there was none about this. She glanced at the little clock over the mantle-piece; she had only time to trace a few hurried lines in reply, which accomplished, Miss Agnes, with a light and swift tread, and carrying her little desk which never left her bedroom but in her own company, put on her humble little dark-grey cloak and black hat, and glided along the gallery without meeting any one, and down the great staircase. She was just entering the vestibule when a side-door opened, and she was encountered by the last person in the world whom she would have liked to meet.

"Going out!" exclaimed Mr. Shadwell, with a look of such honest astonishment as made her feel how necessary an explanation was. "Going out! Have you quite lost your little head? What do you think of *that?*" The question followed a brilliant flash of lightning. "And do you hear that?" he added, as the nearer thunder rolled over their heads.

"Is it very foolish?" she said, with a deprecatory little laugh. "I delight so in thunder and lightning; is any thing so magnificent?"

"That's all very fine, but Farmer Dobbs down there had two cows killed by lightning last year—besides, don't you see the rain?"

He had opened the hall-door a little, and some heavy drops had already fallen upon the steps.

"The rain! Oh yes, indeed!" she said.

"Rather a damper, I should say," suggested he.

She laughed again.

"Then I suppose I'm not to go out—absolutely?"

"Certainly not," he replied, lifting his finger; "I'm very angry at your having thought of such a folly"—he was speaking in a low tone, and with a smile—"but, naughty as you are, I can't bear to kill you quite. I won't allow you to kill yourself; I really can't make up my mind to lose my secretary so soon."

"Well," she said, laughing again, "I must only look from a window, high and dry, with the fate of Farmer Dobbs's cow before my eyes—Oh, how grand!"

She paused, as indeed he did, while this new peal ran over their heads, and spread and rebounded among the distant hills. "How awful and glorious!" she murmured, when it was over. "Can we wonder at its being taken for the voice of God?"

"And the moon for a green cheese, and the Pope for an oracle, and an electric crack for a verse in the Bible. I never wonder at any absurdity. None of your heroics with me, you little rogue;" and, with a laugh, he drew back into his room, and closed the door.

On the stair Miss Marlyn paused with a changed countenance. She was terribly in earnest about the short letter which was to travel by that night's post. It *must* go. She would have walked twenty miles through the thunder-storm to post it. She could have walked down now, and passed on her way through the other door to the town; but, coming or going, she was sure to be observed. She must lay her account, with Mr. Shadwell's hearing of it. What would he think? She could have easily confessed her folly, and pleaded her girlish Quixotism, had it not been for the unlucky rencontre at the hall-door. He was shrewd and suspicious, she intuitively felt, where feminine motive was concerned. Henceforward, were she now to go, he would watch her with an eye of scrutiny and doubt. That would never do.

She looked at her little silver watch—a present from a prodigal English bagman, an adorer. It was still reliable, having hardly entered on its second year. Time pressed. She dared not ask a servant. The antipathy of that race to the governess order was against it, and she had made no confidences among them yet. The old paneled oak clock, with hour-glasses and scythes, and bald Father Time, with his forelock, and the hours carved in bold relief, was ticking stolidly above her at the stair-head. Four minutes faster than her new silver watch was this grim old monitor. It was distracting.

Suddenly she remembered Carmel Sherlock.

During the months she had been living here, she had hardly spoken fifty words to that queer shy person; and yet she trusted him thoroughly, though, metaphysically, she treated him as an enigma not worth studying.

In another minute she was at his chamber door and knocked. There was a quailing and wailing of the precious Stradusrius going on within, an odd accompaniment to the thunder without, which prevented her first and second summons from being heard. At the third, the fiddle suddenly was mute, and Carmel Sherlock, with the instrument under his arm, stood pale and amazed in the half-open door-way, and gazed in the face of the handsome girl from under his black elf-locks.

Without ceremony, Miss Agnes Marlyn entered, and shut the door.

"Can you get away down to the town, and nobody see you?" demanded the young lady, hurriedly.

"Ay, to the town? Pray sit down, Miss Marlyn; this is a great honor," replied Carmel Sherlock.

"Thanks, no; I'll stand, please. I've come to ask a great favor; and if done at all, it must be done quickly. It's just what I said, that you'll go down to the town for me this minute; can you, Mr. Sherlock?"

"Surely — yes — who's ill? — who?" said he anxiously.

"No one; it's to oblige *me*—a *great* obligation, Mr. Sherlock; you must promise to mention it to no one."

"Ay? how? What am I to promise?"

"Secrecy," she answered, "only that. It's the merest trifle—next to nothing—only to go down to the village. I would do it myself—I was going—but there's a difficulty."

"Afraid of that?" said Sherlock, pointing up with an odd smile, as the blue glare of the lightning, followed by the reverberations of the thunder, startled her again.

"*Not* afraid of that; I was going, but was prevented by an accident. I feel, Mr. Sherlock, that I can trust you. Will you accept my confidence, and do me that great service at a very trifling cost — the walk to the village? I'm sorry it's raining."

"I'll go, yes—oh dear, yes!"

"And promise, upon your honor, never to say *what* you did, nor that you went at my request; do you promise?" As she spoke, Miss Marlyn laid her hand upon his arm, and looked with a haggard entreaty into his eyes. The little chamber was darkened by the storm, and the successive flashes, as they talked, illuminated the stern features of the girl, and, in their livid light, bereft them of their color.

"I do—oh *yes*—certainly—upon my honor. I thank you, Miss Marlyn, for your confidence; I do, and it is wise—truth lies at the bottom of a well. I'm very deep."

"You are to put this in the post—that's all;" and with these words she placed the letter in his hand.

Setting it down upon the table, "My God!" he exclaimed, staring at it with a horror that made her begin to fear he might know more than she had suspected.

"What's the matter, sir?" said Miss Marlyn, a little fiercely, and turning very white.

"It's very odd—we were playing a farewell;" he spoke this to his fiddle, looking it grimly in the face. "It came very freely—of itself, almost. It wasn't for nothing; it's all a system of echoes and reflections; no power ever lost, every force made to exhaust its utmost value. You call it omens, I call it economy. And the letter—good God, ma'am!"

Saying this, he poked the Stradusrius toward it, as if he expected to learn something of its spirit through that semi-intelligent medium.

"*There's* the letter—you've promised to post it—you *may*, of course, play me false—*will you?* There's not one minute to lose, if you mean to keep your word."

"Look there, at that clock," said he, nodding toward the dial of his Dutch clock; "it's right to the twentieth part of a second. I may stay here six minutes longer, and yet be in time to post it—but I'll never post it, unless you first answer me a question."

"Then, sir, you've deceived me, and I shall take my letter away," said she loftily, extending her hand toward it. If she expected to change his purpose by this appeal, she was mistaken. As a gigantic spider pounces on a fly, his lean hand seized the letter.

Your letters become *mine*," he said, with a cunning laugh, which gave place to an expression of savage menace, as he added, "By *Heaven!* it's mine, except on that condition."

Miss Agnes Marlyn was now pretty well in a corner.

"I'm not going to put a pistol to my head for you, miss," he said, wagging that head grimly, as he searched her with a suspicious glance.

"What do you *mean*, sir?" said the lady, frightened into something like fury. "How *little* I knew you!" and as she spoke she stamped on the floor.

"What do I mean?" he repeated. "I mean that Rachel—Miss Rachel Shadwell—wrote that letter; and, by Heaven! it's *mine*."

"Miss Rachel Shadwell did *not* write a *line* of it. She does not know of its existence. I *swear* it!'

"Who wrote it?" demanded he.

"*I*—upon my sacred honor, *I!—there*. I've placed myself in your hands; you can't, in generosity—in common manhood, you can't betray me."

"I *won't* betray you! I believe what you say—every face is glorified by truth—I saw truth in yours as you spoke—I was half mad; no wonder."

Carmel Sherlock walked once or twice, with a kind of shudder, up and down his little chamber, and threw open his window and stood at it for two or three seconds.

"If I thought," he said, returning suddenly to the table and eyeing her with a new access of suspicion, "that she was writing to that man to accept him for her husband—that is, without her father's knowledge and consent—I'd take my own course."

"Young ladies, sir, don't do such things—it's simply impossible. You said, sir, you believed my word of honor. It was *I* who wrote the letter; it concerns no member of this family but myself, and no other knows of its existence."

Carmel drew a deep breath of relief; he looked up and then down, and stroked the back of his friendly Stradnarius, and "Oh dear!" said he gently, with a smile. "Miss Agnes Marlyn, you've wrung my heart. Only in a dream—only in a dream."

She looked uneasily at the clock.

"Two minutes still," said he, reading the dial. "I won't fail you. I'll prove it—only not yet, for *I* intend to put myself in *your* power. *I'll* be to you transparent; you shall have my pure but dreadful secret. I'm sure you are good—beauty is the surface of goodness, and nature never lies."

Tenderly and reverently he replaced his beloved fiddle in its berth, and whispered some words to it, she fancied, as he did so.

"And now," said he, as he took his coat and hat, "not for this trifling service, and the secrecy I promise, but for all I will yet do for you, and for the sake of humanity, you will share with me that lock of hair—I heard you tell her, on Thursday last, you wear it in your locket."

"Rachel's? yes; *here*. Take it all; I can get more."

He took it to the window for a moment.

"Yes, it is—oh! it *is*—in my hand!" He gazed on it as it lay in the hollow of his palm, with an incredulous rapture. "Lie there—lie there—and oh! Miss Marlyn, you'll speak to me of her sometimes? you'll tell me about her when we meet? Now I must go."

He was gone as he spoke; and Miss Marlyn found herself alone in this odd little room, and bethought her how awkward it would be if any one—say, worst of all, Mr. Shadwell—were to surprise her there. So, listening at the door, and hearing no step near, she made her escape to her own room by a different route, and there, for the first time, her agitations over, with the volatility that belongs to all clever people, broke into laughter, peal after peal, over the ingenuous confessions of Carmel Sherlock, and the conquest of her unconscious pupil, who shared with his fiddle the mysterious devotions of Mr. Sherlock.

CHAPTER XX.

SIR ROKE AT RABY.

On the night I am now going to speak about, there was a pleasant fire in the old-fashioned drawing-room of Raby Hall, for a change had come, within the last day or two, in the weather, and the evenings were cold.

The long suspense about the baronet's visit was ended. Sir Roke Wycherly had arrived with his servants at twenty minutes past nine, and was now making his toilet. His host stood before the fire alone in the drawing-room, awaiting his appearance.

Mark Shadwell's temper had not been pleasant all that day. He looked round on the faded upholstery of the room with a sulky acerbity. He was angry with the furniture, angrier with his guest. Few things could more have galled his pride than to administer the hospitalities of Raby to his cousin, Roke Wycherly.

The door opened—Sir Roke entered. It was more than seven years since they last met. He saw a change in his host, who saw probably a greater one in him.

Sir Roke Wycherly entered smiling. He was tall; he was lean; he had an easy wig on—a wonderful deception—which, however, deceived few people; his eyes had that peculiar haggard character which I have seen in those of some profligate men, showing a great deal of white. He was a little rouged, and cautiously whitened, I think, and was not there something odd—a little line of black, was it—under his eyelashes? altogether, in that long, and when you saw it near, shriveled face, an odious pink and white effeminacy prevailed. His dress was quite unexceptionable, with an air of quiet fashion. Paradoxically, the man of pleasure looked older, and the man of cares and discontent younger, than his years.

"Very glad to see you, Roke," cried Shadwell, advancing with his best smile. "Very welcome; a great many years, Roke, since you've been here."

"A thousand thanks—don't remind me—a thousand thanks, dear Mark. I've heard of you very often in my wanderings, though we don't write letters; and you, I dare say, have heard of me."

"I never hear of any one; I never see a human face. I take in one newspaper, and that's all my society, except the interesting inhabitants of this house; so I confess I have *not* heard; but I *see*, Roke, which is much better, and I'll not allow you to take the airs of an invalid."

Sir Roke laughed, and bowed a little, and shrugged and shook his head.

"I've had a shake or two, though, but never mind; and do tell me, how is Amy?"

"Wretchedly, always—*miserably*, poor thing! other *poor* fellows' wives can give them a lift in country quarters like these—play tunes, or talk,

or make tea, or play a rubber of backgammon, now and then—how charming, you'll say—but those are gayeties for other houses; poor Amy is not equal to any such exertions."

"But really? Do you mean—" began Sir Roke in a sympathetic key.

"I do, indeed; she's a perfect martyr to ill-health; can't come down this evening to see you."

"How very sad! and your daughter?"

"Oh, Rachel's as robust as you please; she'll give us our tea just now, I hope; she ought to be here."

"I've seen her, and she's sweetly pretty," said Sir Roke.

"Oh! met on the stairs," suggested Mark.

"No; in town, at a very old friend's, old Lady Mary Temple's," he replied archly.

Shadwell looked at him, thinking either he or Sir Roke must be mad.

Sir Roke laughed quietly.

"A *carte de visite*—a photo—my dear Mark; the prettiest thing I ever saw in my life almost; you know what a whimsical fool I am when I take a fancy. I followed a cameo I saw at the Paris Exhibition to Florence—where they told me the fellow was who bought it—I did, upon my honor, and from that to Rome, and back again to Paris, where I got it at last; and, by Jove! if that photograph had been taken from the cameo, or both from your daughter, my cousin Rachel, they could not have been more like; and I should be ashamed to tell you—the confession's so ungracious—how much that *carte de visite*, and my restless curiosity, has had to do with my visit to Raby."

They both laughed. There was a little vein of earnest in Roke Wycherly's jesting; there was also, as Shadwell knew, a whimsicality in his fancies, and a pertinacity in their pursuit, of which he could himself have cited instances as eccentric as that of the cameo.

"I've reason to be obliged to her, however, though *you* mayn't, for having led you to this stupid old place, where there's next to no shooting but rabbits, and almost no fishing at all, and, in fact, nothing but air and landscape to offer."

"So much the better; I never was much of a shot, and I always hated fishing; and if you had no end of both, I'm in no condition to try either at present. What I really do enjoy and require is the perfect quiet you seem to dislike, a saunter in your park (he was going to say a ride, but he hesitated, not knowing the state of Mark's stables), and the delightful bracing air of these uplands. It's devilish odd, Mark, but it's true, if you get a knock anywhere," and he touched his waistcoat with his fingers, "and begin to grow a bit hippish, you get a sort of liking for the old places, and for the old faces too, Mark; *I* find it so."

And he smiled and shook his host's hands, promptly.

I don't think he was quite lying when he said all this. There were bits of truth jumbled up in it; and Mark Shadwell, who knew him well, began to think a little better of him, and to remember vaguely how characters are sometimes mellowed by time: and not a romance, but a worldly castle-in-the-air associated with this Roke Wycherly, very agreeably began to build itself up in crimson and gold, as the clouds do in sunset.

"Do you remember that thing from Horace—*Qui fit, Mæcenas*, it begins—that I had to repeat at the end of the Christmas half, for old Beaks? I can't get farther now, but it means that every man quarrels with his own place in life, and envies his neighbor's lot," said Sir Roke.

"Suppose we exchange, then?" said Mark, with a pleasantry that had something of a sneer in it.

"More easily said than done, my dear Mark; we flies don't get free of our cobwebs so easily. There's some truth, *I* can tell you, at the bottom of the cant about money and its cares; there *is* trouble about it. By Jove, Mark, I often think I have too much of it!"

Mark thought he could help him off with a part of his burden.

"Ha, ha! you're laughing, Mark—I know you are; but it's true for all that. When my poor dear father put me on my allowance, four hundred a year—not a shilling more, upon my honor—and I made it do, I think I enjoyed things as I never did since, because I paid for them, and *felt* the price too, I can tell you. Now that I have every thing *gratis*, as it were, the world has lost its flavor. I've often thought how much more enjoying a fellow would be with a smaller income; I don't say I'd have nerve to reduce mine by a guinea, but I *do* think it, Mark, just as fellows who drink too much envy those who haven't got the habit, though they can't give up a glass of their daily quantum, don't you see?"

And having concluded his little oration, Sir Roke yawned gently behind his hand, and closed his eyes languidly for a moment.

"And I tell you what," he resumed quietly, "any one who has been knocking about as much as I have grows tired of it, d'ye see, and likes quiet."

"Well, that's a liking I can gratify, for devil a soul you'll see here from one year's end to another," said Mark, with splenetic jocularity. "Oh! this is my daughter," he said, as she entered the room with Miss Marlyn. "Rachel, this is your cousin, Roke Wycherly."

The baronet approached, smiling, with something foreign, a little ceremonious, in his manner, and took her hand deferentially, and told her he had been wishing, a long time, to make her acquaintance, and asked her a number of trifling questions, and listened to her answers—it seemed to her with a degree of respect and pleasure that was to the young girl still new and very flattering.

The manner was indeed silken, the voice very low and sweet; she felt that she was treated like a person of consequence, and worth pleasing. But there was nothing very engaging, she was conscious, in the sickly and somewhat long countenance that was inclined with an unchanging smile over her.

The matter of pigments and enamel and wig and teeth apart, she could not quite discover where lay the peculiarity in that countenance, which generated a feeling of distrust, and something of the nature of antipathy; she felt only the general effect, which was contracted and deceitful. In those blue eyes was the peculiar light of exhaustion, and about them a multiplicity of small complex lines of cunning and cruelty—a sickly cheek, a wasted look, and a smile

that was artificial and unpleasant, and always there.

It was thus with a mixture of feelings that Rachel regarded him. There was also a sense of pity. The tall thin figure was narrow-chested, and stooped a little, and Sir Roke coughed once or twice a slight cough, which Mark Shadwell, too, had observed.

"She *is* my cameo," murmured he to Mark, when he again took his stand beside him on the hearth-rug. "She's perfectly charming!"

"Do you think so?" said her father, flattered in spite of himself.

"Oh! you *must* see it *yourself*," he insisted; "she's perfectly lovely!" and his eyes rested on her again, as she sat talking to Miss Marlyn at the tea-table. "And the young lady beside her?"

"Oh! that's Miss Marlyn; you remember poor Marlyn of the Guards?"

"*Henry* Marlyn?" suggested Sir Roke, looking still at her.

"Yes, poor fellow!—his daughter."

"*Dear* me!" exclaimed Sir Roke, with more wonder than was quite called for. "He's—he's—sold out, didn't he?"

"Sold out, yes, and dead some years—poor Marlyn! My wife took an interest in her, and got her here. She knew his wife, you know—she died some time before him—and that poor girl was working for her bread in a French school, when Amy heard of her, and brought her here. She's a kind of—I can't call her governess—instructress and companion to Rachel."

"*She's* pretty, but at disadvantage where she sits; very few girls would bear that contrast."

"You're fatigued, Miss Marlyn—you've been taking one of those horrid long walks," said Shadwell, approaching the table; "you ought not to allow her, Rachel; you see she's quite pale."

"No, indeed, sir," said Miss Marlyn, suddenly blushing, so that her cheeks and neck and temples were died with the same brilliant tint, which was again succeeded by an unusual pallor; and Mark Shadwell was pleased to see how an unexpected word from him could agitate her. He did not want his Cousin Roke, however, to observe it, and, turning to rejoin him, he found that he had accompanied him to the table.

"Will you introduce me?" he murmured in Shadwell's ear.

"Sir Roke Wycherly," said Shadwell, presenting him.

"I had the pleasure of knowing some of your family, Miss Marlyn, a great many years ago, before your time. It was abroad I met them last; I had no hope of meeting a daughter of my old friend in this part of the world. And so you're a great pedestrian, are you? A very dangerous accomplishment," he continued, transferring his address to Rachel, "in young ladies; you are such enthusiasts in whatever you take up; you always overdo it—you do, indeed. A little tea, please."

"They do, indeed," he continued, addressing Mark, as he stirred his tea beside him at the fire-place. "You must stop it, pray do; they kill themselves that way—I assure you they do. How *very* well your daughter looks just in that light; *do* look—quite lovely, doesn't she? You must positively stop it."

And so for a time they chatted, till the young ladies departed, and Sir Roke, being undisguisedly sleepy, took his departure also to take possession of the stately old bed in which he was about to pass his first night, since boyish days, at Raby Hall.

CHAPTER XXI.

SIR ROKE WYCHERLY IN HIS BEDROOM.

SIR ROKE WYCHERLY'S man, the grave and gentleman-like Mr. Clewson, had spent nearly two hours in his master's bedroom, accompanied by Dick Willock and Mrs. Wyndle, in reversing and recasting the whole of that provident housekeeper's dispositions for the comfort of his gov'nor, as he called the baronet.

He moved about and inspected and countermanded and adjusted with a quiet but sublime sense of responsibility, which impressed the imaginations of the simple people of Raby. There was no question whether the thing was right or wrong *per se* or easy to accomplish, or next to impossible. It was simply to be done quite inevitable, and to be set about with silent and resolute resignation.

The dressing-table was too near the window. The bed must be got four feet farther from the fire. Mr. Clewson had to place beside it, among other things, the lamp invented particularly, as he informed Mrs. Wyndle, for his master, by "Mussier Lumbell," of Paris, which there was but one other in all the world the same, and the empress had that, and by experiment he showed them how when it was thrown ever so little out of the perpendicular it extinguished itself with unerring precision, and there were little tinted glass globes, rose-colored when the baronet was in the dumps, and green when he wished to read. He had been offered, himself, forty guineas by Mr. Budisman, of London, to take a model of it, but he couldn't allow it for no money; for we were put under obligation of honor in writing to Mussier Lumbell. So he showed the lamp and all its tricks with a grave pride and condescension, and the rustics admired with awe and curiosity.

There was a little thermometer which he hung at the farther side of the bed, away from the fire-place, and which it was his duty to maintain at a given point, at dressing-hours and bed-time. He got Dick Willock to "obleege" him with a hammer and some tacks, and he actually went down upon his knees to tack some neat little strips of gutta-percha to the door next the carpet, to protect the baronet from those draughts and eddies which he feared like the fanning of the wings of Azrael. Though so great a gentleman, Mr. Clewson was not a bit proud. "He put his hands to things quite ready."

There was a most elaborate and splendid dressing-case, which he had only time to disclose generally. They were dazzled. The spirit of magnificent dandyism had been stronger upon the baronet when he purchased it some twelve years ago. In some respects he had sobered, and illusions of that kind had subsided since then. The lust of the eye and the pride of life had since been dimmed and cooled in the first solitudes of the valley of the shadow of death. And the other box, very neat, but by no means gorgeous, polished oak, bound with brass clasps,

a chest, with a thick brass ring at each end for handles. Yes, evidence of the panic and chimeras of the *dominus ægrotus*. The medicine chest which the wonderful Doctor Vandevelde of the Brunens of Nassau, physician, magician, impostor, who yet unquestionably wrought sanitary miracles, induced so many of his rich patients to his advantage, at all events, to purchase. The medicines were mysteries from his own laboratory—extracted, compounded, procurable in no other sanctum or den in all the world. They saw there more tinctures and drops than *Lord Ogleby* ever dreamed of.

It was only a gaze of a few seconds. There were German words on the inside of the cover, and the bottles were queerly shaped, with eccentric stoppers, and might have held the famous Bottle Imp, or even Asmodeus. "*Dear* me!" exclaimed Mrs. Wyndle, who had herself a house keeper's taste for quackery, and admired this exquisite chest accordingly.

The baronet's dressing-gown and slippers were displayed before the fire, and were a little shabby—very shabby, in fact, for so great a gentleman. Very grand when new, no doubt. But they had got rubbed and old; and lessened with a sense of disappointment and relief the immense distance which Mrs. Wyndel had felt widening between her and the great man, and brought him down, in one point at least, to the level of mortals.

It was past eleven o'clock as Mark Shadwell wished good-night to his cousin, Sir Roke, at the threshold of his door. The baronet smiled and waved his hand, and shutting his door, his face looked at once leaner and more haggard, and he yawned dismally; and his dreary eyes looked restless and fierce as he turned them from place to place in his chamber, and asked Clewson if the water was there and every thing right, and screamed at him, with a curse, to know "where the d—l he had hid away those drops, and why on earth they were not on the table," and told him, with an oath, he was not "worth his bread and butter."

Sir Roke had nerves and a liver, and had been twice or thrice, in a gouty panic, to Vichy. His charlatan at the Brunens had given him a habit of swallowing these drops and other physics. But although in this, as in his fastidious appreciation of feminine beauty, he resembled *Lord Ogleby*, he bore no other resemblance to that high-bred type of invalided English chivalry.

He "cussed and swore hawfle, he did," Mr. Clewson said, and he well knew that fact before he entered his service. But such missiles break no bones. All things were taken into account in Mr. Clewson's salary, which would have made many a hard-working vicar, to say nothing of curates, open his eyes.

So now Mr. Clewson, with a countenance as meek and reverential as if a bishop had just blessed him, pointed out with a bow the identical drops which Sir Roke had overlooked, close to his own hand.

"And please, Sir Roke, your dressing-room is ready," said the man, with the same reverential inclination indicating the door.

"*No*," snarled Sir Roke; "*no*, just get me to bed, will you? I'm tired to death by my d—d journey in that rumble-tumble machine. I'll go back in my own."

Sir Roke began to inspect his features in the glass which the man set before him.

"As tired as a ghost, by Heaven! I look as if I had pulled it all the way myself. By Jove, this d—d place will kill me."

There was a pause, and he muttered—

"How young he looks! I might be his father almost—*to-night*—always grumbling—the most good-for-nothing fellow on earth. Never thanked God for a mouthful—no more than *I*; and, by Jove! he looks a dozen years younger than he is; good-looking—a devilish deal better looking than I fancied he could be; and, I dare say, thinks himself an Adonis. We'll see. I'm awfully cut up. Those d—d roads. I must have something. You've got that curaçoa, Clewson? Well—here—*here! will* you?" and he tapped angrily with his finger-tips on the table beside him. "Yes, I *do* look awfully seedy. I don't think I ever looked *so* seedy in my life. D—n you, do *you?*" Just the sort of thing to happen me. *Will* you give it or *not?*"

He leaned back in his chair and sipped the cordial a little, and ended by swallowing what remained with a gulp. His squire stood by his elbow with the high-shouldered foreign bottle; Sir Roke held the glass toward him and had some more.

"Take it *away—will* you?" said he, still leaning back. "Yes, I feel a little more naturally now;" and he stooped forward and again inspected himself in the mirror. "And *look*—see—yes, one would say, now, there's a little blood left in me."

And he held up his head and almost simpered, he thought his pink cheeks so becoming; and this and the glow consequent on his "nip," as Clewson called it, made him feel wonderfully comfortable for a few minutes.

"*You* look a little tired also, Clewson; they gave you your supper, I hope?"

He was so busy about the rooms, he had not had time yet.

"That's very bad management, Clewson; you did not get your dinner, either—those little commissions for me. You ought to be sharper, Clewson — old traveler, you know. Just get me to bed—we'll not be very long—will you? and then just wait in the room there, till you see I'm asleep: and then for goodness sake, do be off and get something. The merciful man, you know, takes care of his servant, the Scripture says," said he, looking up at the cornice in a peevish reverie.

Sir Roke did not know very much about the Scripture, no more did his man, and so the quotation passed muster. And as the impulse of the curaçoa subsided, Sir Roke's benevolence abated, and before he got into bed, I'm sorry to say, he was snarling and swearing, and never alluded to Clewson's supper again.

Old Wyndle was a good-natured woman, but I think no stimulus short of curiosity would have kept her up and awake in her room to give Mr. Clewson his supper, which was keeping hot before the fire.

She could see that Mr. Clewson, great a gentleman as he was, was something of a slave, and stood in awe of that bleak, savage, selfish temper; that he was afraid of Sir Roke, who yet seemed "such a nice gentleman," "and spoke to her in the gallery so friendly;" and as the clock

chimed half past twelve, and at last struck one, and she grew uncomfortably sleepy, she wondered how great folk could be so hard on their servants; "and that poor gentleman, Mr. Clewson, looking just like he was going to faint with hunger—nothing else—and he not daring to swallow a scrap o' cold meat, afraid he should smell it. Smell it, indeed! How *could* he smell a san'wich? Lud 'a mercy, sich noses! And he, poor gentleman! down on his knees, to make every thing ready, and himself not able to stand! There's usage for servants. And I remember the poor old master—how he'd look a'ter his horse, when he'd come in, himself, many a time I mind it. That was for a horse—and here's now for a man. Who'd a thought, wi' his pretty blue eyes, he'd ever 'a bin so hard, an' a good-natured little fellow he was?"

When Mr. Clewson did come to the housekeeper's room, with his tap at the door, "Billie Winkie, the dustman," had been with her, as she was wont to say to the children long ago, when yawning and nodding set in, and he thought the old woman looked, at least, ten years older, and he, *she* thought, "fairly worn off his feet." But supper is the great restorative—sleep, we know, is "great Nature's second course"—the first being what we have mentioned; and Mr. Clewson, for whom and his gossip she had waited for so long, was now quite a new man, and, though grave and sedate, was yet energetic and wide-awake for the ten minutes that followed, over his tea, which, late as it was, he preferred to any other beverage.

There was nothing cynical—no sort of animus in Mr. Clewson's little sketch of his master—neither was there flattery. If it was not a prepossessing picture, it was not Mr. Clewson's fault.

"Well, he's none o' that left—no—he ain't soft nor good-natured, mam, ain't Sir Roke; but the situation's good, mam, very good; if it wasn't, no man would keep it. He allows a good deal o' liberty in off times—so you gets through your work punctually he doesn't care if the old boy had you. He pays liberal, and he passes on a deal o' things—'*ansom* things—to the person as fills my situation. It is a huncommon good situation, but it requires a very superior person to fill it; he would not keep no one helse, and no sich person would keep the place if the hemoluments was less than what they are. *Wild?* Well, I don't know what you mean, quite; he's very reg'lar, mam, and he has his pleasures, I do suppose, like other gentlemen—*more*, I dessay. His 'ealth? It was bad two years ago, but I don't think there's very much amiss with him now, if he would give over them drops and physics. He can go through a deal of amusement and pleasuring when he likes, he can. Them's to himself, of course."

"Between him and his Maker, poor man!" interpolated Mrs. Wyndle.

"Quite so, mam; and I don't know nothink o' the matter," said Clewson, with a quiet decision, which seemed to shut that subject up.

"You've heard him, now and again, I dessay, talk o' the old place and people?" suggested Mrs. Wyndle.

"Which o' the old places do you mean in particlar, mam?" inquired Mr. Clewson, who recollected several haunts, both in Paris and London, which had disappeared from time to time.

"I mean *here*—Raby—Wynderfel—and the old family, and old friends—simple folk, like myself—he used to like old Dolly Wyndle, pretty, little, soft fellow he was; running to my door every hand's turn, for a bit o' cord, or a handful o' saltpetre—you wouldn't suppose how they used to burn it—or an apple. I want this, Wyndle; and, Wyndle, give me that; and so 'twould be; wi' his pretty blue eyes—and I often wondered if he talked of old Wyndle ever?" and she paused.

"Well, as for places, mam, he never likes no place for long; and I don't think he cares for no one—not that cup o' tea," replied Clewson, not satirically, but gravely, as stating a metaphysical fact.

And with this and some more gossip, Mr. Clewson took his leave. And as he might easily miss his way, old Dolly Wyndle conducted him to his door by the back stairs and gallery; and he paused and listened at the door, and opened it as softly as a thief might; and whispered his adieu, and on tiptoe entered his room, and shut the door slowly and soundlessly, as if his life depended on Sir Roke's sleep, although the dressing-room interposed between his bed and his master's.

CHAPTER XXII.

CARMEL'S WALK TO WYNDERFEL.

Sir Roke came down to breakfast in high spirits.

There was always a place for Carmel Sherlock, who seldom contributed, except when a chance question invoked him, to the conversation. Unnoticed he came and departed, like that domestic apparition in the red coat, who harmlessly haunted the meals of the German forester's family in the story.

Sir Roke looked at him; perhaps he expected an introduction, the party was so very small. But Carmel Sherlock was apparently seen by none of the people there, except when Miss Marlyn, with ever so faint a smile and a nod, from time to time handed him, or received, his tea-cup.

Shadwell had again to apologize for his wife's absence. Miss Marlyn was as silent, nearly, as Carmel, except when in an under-tone, she spoke a word or two to Rachel. But Sir Roke chatted very gayly, and had no end of stories and anecdotes to tell, which were quite new, at all events, to Rachel, who—her shyness vanishing—listened and laughed, and questioned, and thought Sir Roke's conversation wonderfully charming.

Mark Shadwell, sometimes inactive during this discourse, was yet pleased. A very odd idea had got into his head. He knew how unstable Roke Wycherly was, but also how violent and imperious his fancies were. He was drawing toward that age at which men are ruled by sense rather than imagination—when they prefer the essential to the conventional—and, with an instinctive acquiescence in the conditions of contracting life, determine to live with the least degree of respect that is decent for fame and custom, and with the most rigorous attention to self. This is the age at which a man, defining

with terrible precision what he wants, dispenses with all the frivolous, and even the respectable incompatibilities—not because his object is dearer, but his sacrifice is less. The value of this one residual idea is dominant, because all the rest have been tried and found wanting. It is the age at which *roués* project the domestic serenities, and marry milkmaids, and fancy that thatched simplicity and ancient faith, and plump innocence, with rosy cheeks and a white skin, are worth finally trying. He has had all that this fashionable, pharasaical, rascally world can give him. His iron safes are full of the counters which are its circulating medium. He has discovered, however, that they are not convertible at the great Bank of Happiness, and he is resolved this time to try his own way. Though all the Rules, aghast, throw up their hands and eyes, and the enraged Prejudices protest till they choke, he *will* have one chance for the *summum bonum* he has always missed. He will set about it, with a cynical enthusiasm, in earnest, before the appointed hour comes, and he must yawn and simper his last, and leave the lights and fiddles forever, and go down and let the undertakers get on his last mufflers in the cloak-room, and the pale waiter at the door cry, "Lord Newgate's hearse stops the way!"

For so great a philosopher, Mark Shadwell was, I am afraid, unduly vain, and even conceited. He thought himself more of a genius than he was. Had he measured his powers more accurately, he might have perceived that his obscurity was not quite so purely an *unlucky* phenomenon. Had he known how many men, all round him, with twice his intellect, and ten times his knowledge, were working, without a single brilliant chance or a hope of distinction, for daily bread, with a manly resignation, he might have been a more contented and a less useless man; but his own mental superiority was an axiom of his system. Success was his birthright, and that he had it not was due to the perversity of a monstrous destiny.

Sir Roke Wycherly was no genius either: in some respects, a shallower man than Shadwell; in others—rather, perhaps, from temperament than intellect—decidedly the stronger. His host, however, no doubt, well knew how to measure his early companion's strength and weakness, and his character was bare before him.

He knew that Sir Roke's fancies were absorbing and violent; but he also knew that he was cautious and secret. These qualities were, at times, opposed, and here was a situation in which their action seemed directly so; yet he could not quite conceal the interest and admiration that were growing upon him.

Fortune owed Mark Shadwell a great compensation. Were the tables about, at last, to turn, and was this visit, the prospect of which had filled him with perturbation, to open a way to a strange but simple reparation?

"What's become of Carmel Sherlock?" asked Mark Shadwell of any one who might choose to answer.

"I did not see him go; but he *was* here," answered Agnes Marlyn.

"Oh! I know; though it might have been yesterday for any thing he said; but he can't have been here ten minutes: he must have gone more than half an hour."

"He sat over there?" inquired Sir Roke, indicating his empty chair. "I was going to ask who he was. Fine eyes, hasn't he?—rather remarkable head?"

"He's a genius of a particular kind, if you like them," said Shadwell.

"No, Mark, I hate' em all. I suppose they're good for geniusing, but they're fit for nothing else. Does he paint pictures, or what?"

"Upon my life, I don't know. He does a little at every thing—he geniuses, as you say; but what I keep him here for is to keep my accounts, and, though he's a genius, he does it very well."

"He's going to put me in a poem, or a picture, or something," said the baronet. "I never was so scrutinized in my life—*quietly*, I mean—for I don't think he knew that I perceived it. But he has got a great pair of lamps for eyes. They don't do for peeping; it's always a stare or a glare, by Jove!"

"So, child," said Mark Shadwell, half an hour later, stopping his daughter, who was running down stairs in her walking things, and smiling with a kind of approbation on her, "our guest amuses you! I don't wonder; very agreeable, isn't he? He always was very good company; and, I can tell you, he thinks you— Well, I won't tell you *all* he thinks of you; but he has been quite opening my eyes on the subject of your perfections and— Where are you going? I told him you'd show him the old bridge of Raby. Can you tell me where Sir Roke is?" he added, addressing Mr. Clewson, whom he saw crossing toward the back stairs.

"Sir Roke is writing his letters in his room, sir."

"Oh! well, after luncheon, then," said he, tapping her cheek with his finger-tip, and smiling. "You *are* looking *extremely* well."

So away she went for her walk with Miss Marlyn, who awaited her on the steps; and, as she went, she was pleased and wondering, for her father had never taken so much notice of her in her life before.

Carmel Sherlock was not among his accounts when his patron sought him that morning. He had gone away fasting, having swallowed only a little tea. A solitary walk over wild and sylvan slopes, and through many a forest hollow, of ivied rock and ash and thorn, with his broad-leafed wide-awake hat on, and his rugged walking-stick swinging in his hand—you'd have thought he was walking with an object. But that straight line of march and rapid stride had none. It carried him to the deeper solitudes of Hazelden. Beginning like a mountain gulley in the woodlands, it wound and deepened under crag and shadow until it became stern, precipitous, and dark as that glen in which the ill-starred marksman of the Hartz cast his enchanted bullets. Utterly solitary and solemn—the haunt of the wild cat, the owl, and the fox—it simulates, even at noonday, the silence and gloom of night. With a little plashing of unseen water far below, with rocks, sometimes broken, sometimes rising, sheer as the walls of Rhenish castles, their fronts stained with lichens or clasped in ivy, and their long chinks and crannies, green with moss and tufted with hanging pellatory;—their steps and chasms are gripped with the roots of straggling trees, and their beetling sum-

mits overtopped with mighty boughs and densest foliage.

Here, at last, he paused, in another world, as it were, and awoke from the dream of life, such as it had been.

There was the hush of faded leaves high above him, and the indistinct plash and moan of waters far below. Seated on a step of rock, in a high nook of this great cathedral, he began his wild self-examination and confession and adoration.

"All the earth doth acknowledge Thee, the Father everlasting! *However, whatever, wherever*, I must, and *do!* Abandoned to general laws, or marvelously seen by Thee, and all my hairs numbered! The spirit sounding—motion—life! Were I to drop from this height, 'twere only into the lap of Nature, to beat my brains out down by the brook there—*there*—in a moment, if I chose"—he was looking down—"I should be alive again, deluded in the next; and here, and now, I still may see her, and hear her—there—and forever my anguish would follow me. Rachel! Rachel!" He called her up and down the ravine, as if he thought a spirit would answer, with his hands clasped. Some large bird flew from below into deeper shadow down the glen. "Away—away!—fly—fly away, whatever you are! Every thing flees from me! Rachel! Rachel! She's gone—she's *gone!* Rachel, you'll never hear me! I come in and out, and to and fro, like a shadow—no one turns, no one cares—and I, who have watched her from her childhood like a spirit, am to her—*nothing*, and never could be—never, never could be!—and now the thing I knew and feared so far off has come up suddenly, and I have seen Death face to face! No one ever dreamed it, nor ever will, except Miss Agnes. And so it is here—suddenly, but foreseen. The coming calamity repeats itself in thoughts and signs, dreams and other ways. My soul went out to meet it. I met it, and saw it on its journey far off a thousand times. She is glad, and my benefactor is happy—and *I?*—I can't complain. I can blame *no* one—not even *myself!* It *was* to be, like death, and no one could help it!"

And thus on and on, with a monotony that was yet various, like the solemn sounds of the solitude that surrounded him, Carmel Sherlock talked down through the sheer darkness to the rocks and trees, as the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance had once done, long before him, in another forest.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE BARONET WRITES TO DEAR ADDERLEY.

Sir Roke was in his room, writing to Pepys Adderley, Esq., a young fellow of forty and upward, who had tried a little of many things and places, and broken down everywhere. An Eton man—always in a good set—full of the idle energy of adventure and pleasure. He had seen the last guinea of his little patrimony fifteen years ago. He spent two years in the Levant. He visited Australia, and wrote home flourishing accounts of his growing fortunes to his old mother, from whom he requested a sum of money a few months later. He has been seen at California. He has written three sketch-books of travel; the longest is in two "sparse" volumes, as his publisher terms them, and he still owes something to his printer. I don't know that Adderley's pedigree would bear sifting; but he has always been among men of rank and fortune. He likes good *entrées* and good wines, and other people give them to him, though he's not pretty, not witty, and not good-natured; but being a used-up man of fashion, with gay spirits, whose pride would stand a good deal of rough handling, with seasoned modesty and obliging morals, who thoroughly knew the town, and the world, he suited Sir Roke precisely, and had been, under the rose, his comptroller, master of the horse, and what you please, ever since his little visit to the baronet had commenced at his pretty house at Richmond, more than two years ago.

To this gentleman, whom he had dispatched to Scarbrook to await his arrival and administer for him in the interim, he was now writing thus:

"My Dear Adderley,—No one is more ready to admit than I the immense value of your time; and therefore I merely hint that, if you *could* waste a very few minutes in improving your valuable letters, they might be applied with advantage in *forming* the words of your sentences, which at present are only *indicated*, and in thus saving me an infinity of fruitless trouble. I would also suggest that if, instead of thinking *after*, you would take the trouble to think *before* you write, it would obviate the necessity of those frequent erasures and interlineations which farther complicate the problem of speculating upon your meaning. I write at present to beg you won't go to races or any other d—d thing, just for a week. By that time I shall be at Scarbrook; and *pray* don't leave, as I may write by any post, and arrive the train after. Write to this place up to Saturday. I shall go to town on Sunday, and remain there till Tuesday, or perhaps Wednesday; you may expect me on either day. It is just possible a friend may precede me. Suppose we call her Mrs. — (any name you please, only tell me what), and you receive her as your married—any relation you please—a mere *lark* as you say—but the rustics must not be offended. Have you any objection? We shan't remain many days at Scarbrook, and you shall never see that dull spot of earth again. She must be received with respect, observe, being, I assure you, a lady. Her maid will accompany her. Let me have a line, *legible*, by return of post. Let my people make every thing, in a small way, as comfortable as possible. I don't understand the object of what you call 'roughing it.' Ever, dear Adderley, yours sincerely, R. W."

Sir Roke came down and talked with Amy Shadwell, whom he found at last in the drawing-room. The pretty Amy of long ago, with the large hazel eyes—those eyes would always be pretty—and the slender figure, and white delicate hands, and her pretty even teeth, and the early pleasant smile; but how very delicate she looks! there can be no mistake here—poor little smiling thing! She'll not be a trouble very long to Mark!

Mark, her first and only love, whom she still loves, and thinks the handsomest and the cleverest man on earth, whose looks she watches by stealth, for whom she hazards little hesitating smiles on the chance, just the *chance*, of willing him back, even for a moment, to the illusions of by-gone days, and luring him into one answering smile. Poor little smiling thing, with always the same load at her heart!

I wonder whether any woman, except a very coarse one, ever met a man who had admired and pursued her once, and not beheld her since, for an interval say of ten years, without a secret shrinking and a pang; she would rather remain unseen, leaving the early image in its place unbroken.

Sir Roke Wycherly advanced and took her hand with a smile that admitted no shock and no decay. He sat beside her at the sofa with an air so tender and respectful as testified that the romantic gallantry of chivalric days was not over.

They talked a great deal of all sorts of things, and of old times, of course, and he said some pretty things, at which she laughed, but was pleased, and repeated them after to old Wyndle and pretty Rachel, and laughed more. She knew it was flattery, but spoken by the man who once felt it, there still was the ring of sincerity in it.

She talked to him of course a great deal about her demi-god Mark, and he listened, I am bound to say, respectfully; and he thought within himself what an odd arrangment of nature it was that women do go on liking particular fellows. It answers some end, he supposed; but it did seem to him a mystery, worshiping fellows like Mark there, who has not cared a pin about her for ten years or more.

"What a pretty creature she was, sweetly pretty!" Sir Roke thought; "very gentle, and rather agreeable. She seemed to me positively clever when she was young. What fire and point a brilliant eye lends to a bon-mot! How their good looks tint and lighten up their conversation! Mark will be looking out for a wife—he'll try for money this time—I'll back him to get a woman with money. Wonderful fellow he is; his hair—what a mystery the hair *is*"—Sir Roke had a great deal of trouble with his whiskers; we know that the upper tresses grew, hair by hair, in the studio of the great M. Picardin of Paris, and had ceased to cost the baronet any anxiety—"a wonderfully preserved fellow, as good-looking almost as ever he was, and the estates and a very good name, the Shadwells; it's time he should make a push somehow—great advantage to my pretty little friend Rachel, pretty little girl, the Miranda of this solitude—I wonder where they are." He was by this time in his room, and rang his bell for Clewson. "Find out where the young ladies are, will you? and if they have gone out for a walk, in what direction, and get the people to show you, so that you can point it out to me, *will* you?"

In the interim Sir Roke made an inspection before the mirror, and some little repairs and embellishments, and then walked out, as unexceptionably got up as he would have done in Mayfair.

"I've no fancy for killing birds," he used to say, "or deer, or fish, or *myself*, by Jove! a little delicacy in boyhood saves one from all that, and I never could contract, thank Heaven, a taste for the drudgery and butchery of what they call their sports, fiddling with worms and handling fish, or killing a great deer as big as a cow, or breaking my neck in pursuit of a stinking fox! I'm not ashamed to say I'm a bit of a cockney, and don't care to kill my own meat, and like to be clean; and I look on the country as a very decided bore, a place where we get our flour and beef from, and go when we're sick; but I'm altogether of Captain Morris's way of thinking about the grove of chimneys and the sweet shady side of Pall Mall."

CHAPTER XXIV.

UNDER LADY ALICE'S WINDOW.

Miss Marlyn's dress is very nun-like, made high up, with broad plates, quite simply. She makes them herself, I think—the material nothing remarkable; she affects greys—silver greys, I think we call them—which look as if they were shot with silk, but are not; grey, nun-like, I say, but with just a little bit of color below her full white throat, a knot of crimson velvet or cerise. I can't be quite sure; just a few inches of soft and intense color, harmonizing, the French know how, with the shy elegant grey. It is the most humble, quiet, piquant thing in all the wardrobe of cruel Love. Every thing is in keeping. The little bonnet she used to wear—nothing—*straw*; but there is a tournure in it, as in every thing she wears; and the croquet gloves she pulls on so carelessly: is the prettiness theirs, or is it all in the slender hands they cover? Her dress might have been shorter without violence to the fashion—*mutabile semper*—of that particular season, but it would have lost its conventual quietude, and when some cruel chance for a moment shows her boot, you see the prettiest boot, the prettiest foot in all the world.

When this young lady took her walk to-day with Rachel, it seemed to her pupil that she was not in her usual spirits, or, truth to say, temper. She was silent, or stopped her companion's overtures to conversation with short and dry answers, so much so, that Rachel asked her whether she had vexed her. Whereat Miss Agnes looked full at her on a sudden with her deep grey eyes, and laughed.

"*No!* what makes you think that?" she answered.

"Your silence and your manner," replied Rachel.

"Well, I *have* been silent, I believe, and I really don't know why; but my *manner?*" said Miss Marlyn.

They were by this time under the grey walls of the ruined Manor House of Wynderfel.

"Yes, Pucelle, your manner," repeated Rachel.

"Well, Rachel, I did not intend—I did not even perceive it—*there*, won't you?"

And she drew her toward her and kissed her, and then held her from her and looked for a moment in her face with an expression which Rachel did not understand.

"Vexed with *you*; good God! what a notion!" she exclaimed, with a sharp disdain; "what in the whole earth *could* I be vexed with you about?

You know, dear Rachel, I love you. Come, do pray let us talk of something else."

"Shall I tell you about Lady Alice?"

"Do," answered Miss Agnes; and Rachel related the story.

"It's a very pretty, sad story—love and jealousy—poor thing!" said Rachel, by way of epilogue to her tragedy.

"Lady Alice, what a goose!" said Miss Marlyn.

"Ah! you don't think so, Pucelle," answered Rachel.

"From *that* window?" inquired Agnes, as she stood up and looked through her little glass at it. She did not smile, she looked without sympathy or interest, as she might at the "drop" of a prison at which a person had been executed.

"A high window," she said at last. "If she did go about it, Lady Alice was quite right to do it effectually, don't you think? An odd fancy to live in a garret, though! *I* did it once, because I could not help it. Old La Chouette we used to call old De la Perriere. De la Perriere, indeed! Her real name was Roque, and her father was porter in a dirty old house near Notre Dame. *She* put me into one; but I'll never sleep in a garret again."

There was something both cynical and dismal in Agnes Marlyn now, that was quite new to Rachel, and which somehow made her feel uncomfortable, and even nervous.

"It was not a garret, however, in *our* sense," she said. "It was, on the contrary, a very fine chamber; look to what a height the roof rose above it, and look inside with your glass, and you'll see a wonderfully carved mantle-piece. There is a great stone with the Shadwell arms, and I don't know how many quarterings over it. It was quite a splendid room."

"And if she was so comfortable, why did she kill herself?" asked Miss Marlyn.

"She was wild with grief, and love, and jealousy, poor thing!" answered Rachel.

"I don't pity her a bit," said Miss Marlyn.

"You don't!" exclaimed Rachel.

"Neither will you, when you know better," replied Agnes. "How can you interest yourself about a fool?"

"*Why* a fool?" asked Rachel.

"Because she was jealous, and a greater one for killing herself. If she *would* kill some one, she should have killed *him*. But he was not worth it."

"I think, Pucelle, you want to shock me," said Rachel after a little pause; "why do you talk like that?"

In fact, it was something wicked in Pucelle's face rather than in her words, which were, like those of young people, often loosely spoken, that vaguely startled Rachel Shadwell; but people don't always take the trouble to analyze their impressions.

"Oh! every one talks what they don't half mean sometimes. I think all that business up there was miserable folly," said Agnes Marlyn. "She was an *imbecile*, that's all. It would have been murder, of course, to kill him, and murder's wicked; but it was worse to kill herself. It's a world of tyranny."

"What do you mean, Pucelle?" asked her companion.

"I was tyrannized over ever since I was a wee thing like that," and she laid her left arm across her breast, and locked it in her right, like a baby, with a laugh.

What a wonderfully pretty strange nurse she would have made!

"*You* like babies, dear little sweet things, you know," she continued, and laughed again—not pleasantly, Rachel thought. "As long as I can remember papa used to box my ears for any thing, or *nothing*, every day almost, and lock me up in a dark room; and after my mother died, often half-starved me, when I knew he had money enough in his pocket for his pleasures."

"Agnes, dear, I thought you loved him!" said Rachel, with wide and sorrowful eyes.

"So I did, I believe, in spite of it. I don't know why—he did not deserve it. Perhaps because he was lively, and amused me sometimes, when he took the trouble; and he was a man, and we like to be ill-used by men. It seems to suit—nature designed it, I suppose—slave and tyrant. But the idea of being *jealous* of a man!"

And she smiled along the daisies at her feet, in a listless contempt.

"Madame du Barry was a very wise woman: she did not know what that sort of jealousy meant; she never teased the king."

"Was she a good woman?" inquired Rachel.

"*Yes*," answered Miss Agnes, with decision, "I read her life, in my garret, once; she wrote it herself. She had no Tartufferie about her and was good-natured—that's what I mean by good."

"But was she really good?" asked Rachel.

"Yes—well enough—good and wise in her way, I suppose; how should *I* know?" replied Miss Marlyn carelessly.

"And who was she?" inquired her pupil.

"She was one of Louis the Fifteenth's wives, when he died."

"One of his wives!" repeated Rachel, as not having heard her rightly.

"Yes; kings have as many as they choose," Agnes laughed. "Upon my honor, they have. King David had, and every other king that was worth a rush, ever since; as many as ever they choose. Why do you stare, child? I'd tell you no end of things—all true—only you'd tell them again, and get poor Pucelle into trouble."

She had two or three pebbles in the palm of her hand, which she was throwing with tiny jerks into the air, and rolling them about, and looking intently on them all the time she spoke; so that Rachel saw nothing of her eyes but their long lashes.

"I should not like to hear any thing I might not tell mamma," said little Rachel, spiritedly.

Her simplicity may amuse town-bred young ladies; but they will excuse her, remembering that she had not their advantages, and that her young mother had been her near and sisterly companion.

"No, of course not—what a little fool! Your mamma, of course; *I* tell every thing to your mamma myself," said Agnes quietly, still rolling the little pebbles in her hand. "All I say is, that no woman ought ever to make a fool of herself about any man; and no woman but an idiot, absolutely, could think of hurting herself for jealousy."

"They say that jealousy is a sign of love,"

argued Rachel, in support of the sentiment of this legend of Wynderfel, which had seized on her imagination. "Wives always love their husbands best.". She thought she saw the light of a smile cross Agnes's downcast face at these words. "And if they did not love them best, why should they marry them?" she added, arguing resentfully with that smile.

Agnes Marlyn looked full at her for a moment, with laughter in her deep dark-grey eyes that she did not understand, and with the end of the daisy she had plucked from the bank close by, between her fingers, she knocked the pretty tip of Rachel's nose, as one of Titania's fairies might have done, with the tiniest little tap in the world, and almost whispered—

"Mademoiselle Simplicity!"

They sat down for a time, in silence, on that old stone bench which I have already mentioned. It was the drowsy time of day, when the afternoon sun is warm, and the air hardly stirs. Rachel had a book with her, and turned over its leaves, and laid it down.

"Let us come to the ruin—the chapel, I mean, close by," said Miss Marlyn, getting up listlessly. "We'll sit under the window, in the shade of the ivy; it is pleasanter than here."

CHAPTER XXV.

SOME ONE LOOKS IN AT THE WINDOW.

The ruined chapel of Wynderfel stands on the slope behind the Manor House, embowered among grand old trees. A broken stone fence, here and there half obliterated, surrounds it; and a few stooping thorn and elders have straggled within it; an ancient yew-tree—which has witnessed, no doubt, the old funereal splendors of the Shadwells, whose burial-place this chapel was ever so long ago—still maintains its sombre supremacy in the centre of the long-disused church-yard.

Agnes Marlyn's conversation had somehow frightened Rachel. Up to this she had seemed always playful, girlish, like herself; a sort of malign revelation had taken place. She had mistaken her; her sympathies were not with the child. The young girl felt she was making a mock of her; knew that she was the stronger; that she was mistress of a knowledge that was not good, and whose nature she had not apprehended. She was not as high as she thought, but more dangerous. She could not define all this; it was such an overpowering impression as comes in a dream, and there was a sense of sorrow and degradation mingling with her fear.

In an evil world the evil is the more potent spirit, and overawes the good. We have not faith enough in Time, the vindicator; how few, even in Eternity, that will adjust all equities! The *present* is the inheritance of evil. We instinctively know this, and the knowledge clothes its fascination and cruelty in terror and power.

The first imperfect manifestations with which Evil hints its presence, touch the eternal antipathies of human nature with a frightful thrill. The ideas of danger and pain foreshadow its approach. Neither is there any such thing as a long hypocrisy; sooner or later the features of Evil appear with unmitigated distinctness. It is self-revealing, like Good, but manifests itself sooner, because its power is of *time*, and the other of eternity.

Agnes could not help it—did not care. As in the dead body the blood will gravitate hither or thither, as the body lies, and in due time show itself on the discolored skin, so it is with evil. Its law is, when the time and place arrive, to come to the surface. There was a pain at her heart, which she would not acknowledge, and the nature of which her proud spirit scorned. The mood was upon her, and the self-revelation the expression of her pain.

Rachel hoped that her companion would not renew her dismaying talk. They entered the old church-yard, and threaded their way, among half-buried tombstones, upon a soft undulating sward, untufted and untangled with those rank weeds and dark high grass, that so painfully indicate the recent grave-yard.

Rachel would have gladly seized some subject of conversation far removed from that which had just ended. The objects that now surrounded them might easily have suggested one. But somehow it would not come at call; and before she could find it, Agnes Marlyn began.

"Girls take fancies, of course," she said; "*I* could take a fancy to a man, but fall in *love* with him—no more than with a wolf or a shark!"

She sat down on the great stone of the eastern window, where, in old days, the altar had been; and just before her pretty feet, nearly buried in the unequal grass, stretched the tomb of Sir Hugh Shadwell, who *hic jacets*, with the customary patience and virtue. He was the hero of the Lady Alice drama: "Eques auratus, vir præclarus," reposing in hope, and greatly mourned. The eidolon, carved in white marble, once gilded and painted, now lies in the parish church of Raby, removed many years ago, for better preservation, to that site, from Wynderfel chapel, which, however, still enjoys the distinction of Sir Hugh's personal presence, and the custody of his bones.

"There's no man ever lived—or ever will—could make me, for jealousy, prick my finger-tip with a needle, much less die for him. Men come into the world to support women—women to please men with their beauty, and be supported; men to ill-use them, and they to deceive men. Whatever they marry for, they are sure to plague one another before the game is over. The Sabine women we read about in the Roman History yesterday—much love and romance there was there! And they made as good wives as any. Don't you see, *ma belle etoile?* The woman finds the pot, and the man the pullet; neither can get on without the other—and there's the secret of romance. The woman runs after an establishment, and the man after a pretty face. It's quite true; ask your papa."

Rachel looked with a haughty surprise at Miss Marlyn.

"Or any other man," she continued; "they'll all tell you the same. Every girl should hold herself ready to marry the first good party that offers—you, for instance, should marry Sir Roke Wycherly, if he asks you."

"*I*—Sir Roke Wycherly!" almost gasped amazed Rachel.

"Come, come, you can't pretend, dear, not to see that he has fallen in love at first sight, poor old gentleman!" laughed Agnes, a little dryly

"I really think, Agnes, you are mad yourself, or trying to make me so; either *that*, or you have been mystifying me all the morning," said Rachel, vexed and bewildered. "I should be very glad to be assured of that."

"A drowsy day—a little sultry," said Miss Agnes, standing up, and with clasped hands extending her arms with a listless stretch. "Mystifying? perhaps mystifying myself too. Whenever you talk sense, quite in earnest, you are very likely to talk some nonsense along with it, at least I do; but, on the whole, you'll find I'm right. You'll find what I say true, and why not? What objection to Sir Roke? Marry him, if he asks you; "I don't say he will, though. But he has waited a long time, poor gentleman! and he deserves a young wife. Yes, marry him, he deserves it; I like to see a rich, old selfish bachelor suitably married to a young, spirited, clever wife, who is also beautiful; a very interesting game ensues."

Again she stretched her arms as before, and added: "All I pray is this, that if he does ask you, you'll do me the justice to say that I urged you, as strongly as I could, to marry him."

"I suppose this is all a joke," said Rachel; "but it is not a kind or even a good one, Agnes, and I beg you'll talk of something else.

"I'm tired talking, suppose we read?" said Agnes.

"Yes, certainly; I should like it so much," answered Rachel, eagerly. But here arose a delay, for she had forgotten her book on the stone seat beyond the Manor House. "I'll run and get it!"

"Yes; I'm lazy—tired—I'll stay here," said Miss Marlyn, a little ungraciously.

So away went Rachel, through the arched door way under the belfry, and across the little enclosure. The sound of her retreating steps died away, leaving Agnes Marlyn in silence and in deep meditation.

A voice oddly connected with her thoughts, hard and snarling, quite close, on a sudden startled her. Sir Roke Wycherly was at the window, looking through upon her, with a very angry countenance.

"Charming retreat—did not expect to see *me*—nor *desire*, possibly. Where's your companion, pray?"

"Gone down to the ruined house," she answered, with a sudden change of color.

"Coming back?"

"Oh yes!"

"How soon?"

"In a moment, I think," she answered.

"In a *moment!*" he repeated. 'Yes, I thought I saw her run down there, and I've only a word to say. I'm not a boy—I'm not a fool—I'm, on the contrary, a pretty sharp old fellow, and no subject on earth for child's play; I shall remain here till Saturday—not a day longer—for I *must* be in town on Sunday morning, d'ye see? I merely mention this, because I'll decide within that time; there's nothing unreasonable. 'No,' is very easily pronounced, and I merely object to being trifled with. Before your face I have evinced a very natural admiration for your pupil; of course, it is observed. What a *fool* you are!—Pray excuse me. I say Saturday, for of course, *I* must make up *my* mind, whatever other people do, and I won't endure any caprices, nor run myself into the smallest trouble, I assure you. I allow myself to that day, not an hour longer, to decide in. *What's* that? is she coming? Well, that's enough for the present. If you want to tell me any thing, I'll find an opportunity—not altogether *I—you* must assist; but, of course, I shall be much obliged and flattered by a conference, and I may as well say frankly, I don't quite *understand* you, Miss Marlyn."

"Nor I *you*, Sir Roke Wycherly," answered the young lady, coldly.

"Yes, you *do;* I beg pardon, but you *certainly* do—you can't possibly *mis*understand me—you can't be such a *fool*—excuse me. You do understand me, and you understand *perfectly* every incident of my conduct.

He paused.

"Is she coming?—eh?—I'll go down and meet her;" and, for the first time, he smiled, though his smile was neither a warm nor a bright one, and he kissed the tips of his fingers, and waved them toward her, and disappeared.

Miss Marlyn looked after him, very stern and pale, with dilated and brilliant eyes. Then she drew a long breath, so that the folds at the neck of her grey dress rose and fell, and she looked down on the tomb of Sir Hugh Shadwell, at the foot of which she was standing; you would have fancied that she was reading the epitaph, and that her smile was tinged with the dark cynicism which such be-pufferies of defunct bad men will raise.

And she murmured, "He's very angry;" and with the point of her parasol was poking away the moss from the projecting edges of one of the black-letter words, on which she smiled. She had something of Mark Shadwell's philosophy about the Sir Peter Teazles of this mad world.

"He's very angry!"

She smiled more, and looked closer at the moss, and worked more diligently. What a pretty "Old Mortality" Sir Hugh, the *vir præclarus*, had found!

"Candescent," she murmured. But these attentions were not for him, or even for his tomb. She was using him merely, in a state of pre-occupation, as young ladies will living men, I am told, on occasion, as softly as if love-passages were being whispered between her and the recumbent Sir Hugh; but she was only quoting her little quarto dictionary, playfully. "'*Candescent—growing white—applied to metals at a white heat.*' Ha! he does look very angry!"

She thought she heard voices, and listened.

"Yes, here they come!"

And with her pretty cruel feet she stepped lightly up the limbs and across the face of the helpless Sir Hugh, and sat down in her old place on the window-stone, and whisked her parasol to her side, where it lay between two fingers of her slim glove, and laid her other hand upon the carved stone of the window, looking out pensively upon the sad and solemn picture, and quite arranged for the coming surprise.

CHAPTER XXVI.

WHAT DOES SIR ROKE MEAN?

THEY were not quite so near as Miss Marlyn thought. Sir Roke hated brambles and stiles,

and cursed stepping-stones, and always suspected grass of damp, even in the fiercest glare of July. He picked his way therefore, and spared himself all the trouble he could. "What the devil pleasure can there be in sitting in that beastly church-yard? So *like* women! With a garden and flowers and every thing at home, they come down here to sit in a dirty paddock, wetting their feet, and breaking their legs over tombstones!"

He had nearly reached the ruined house of Wynderfel before he espied Rachel returning with her book. He lifted his hat and smiled with all his fascination. "My long walk at last is *rewarded*," said he, gallantly. "I surprised Miss—Miss—your friend, in the picturesque little chapel you have chosen for your shrine—pray, allow me." He would have taken her book, but with a new sense of things, the fruit of Miss Marlyn's exhortation, a shyness mingled with dislike, she declined his aid, and, a little disconcerted and annoyed, pursued her way accompanied by the polite baronet, who chatted agreeably and murmured his little flatteries by her side. She was relieved, however, of the apprehension that he would attach himself to them during the remainder of their ramble; he had no notion of doing so.

There was a change in Rachel's manner, which, though decidedly the reverse of flattering, yet both pleased and amused him. Oddly enough it struck him as in the highest degree auspicious.

He stood in the little archway under the belfry chatting agreeably, holding his slender umbrella crook upward, and corresponding in his niche with the antique monumental bishop at the other side, in bas-relief, crosier in hand, and liliputian angel on his shoulder; possibly Sir Roke had his spiritual prompter at his ear also, if people's eyes could see such things.

The baronet did not remain more than five minutes, and walked home to luncheon in decidedly better temper than he had set out.

Mark Shadwell, like other solitary and discontented men, was given to building castles in the air. He had reared and tenanted many in his day; and once in occupation, he held to his tenancy, against all hints and even processes, with admirable tenacity, until the castle fell. He was not exacting in the matter of proof; very light material sufficed for their construction. Now, as we know, he had a theory in hand: like one of the old cage-work houses, it stood in outline first, and Mark found brick and mortar as often as Sir Roke Wycherly talked, to build in the interstices.

Mark liked making a cumulative case of this kind. As he and his guest stood on the hall door-steps to-day, for instance, admiring the long files of lofty timber that darkened the avenue, the baronet's talk went off on other matters, and at last he made quite a little homily upon the dissipations of the gay world and their effects on the habits, characters, and worth of young ladies; and then he harangued on the grace of simplicity in such terms as satisfied him that he could only be thinking of Rachel.

After dinner, over their glass of wine, again, Sir Roke made a picture of domestic, not rural life, which he contrasted in his own way with the sort of life he had hitherto led. Perhaps he really felt what he said, for of late his qualms and panics about his health had very much spoiled for him the flavor of his old life. It was merely like a spoken reverie, but was enough to contribute to the masonry of Mark's chateau.

"You must not grumble, Mark," said Sir Roke again; "if you knew but all, you are better than I, with broken health, and no pursuit, and no tie, and placed on a d—d regimen, and forbidden nearly every enjoyment on earth! How would you like that?"

Sir Roke was grumbling, in his way, now, and exaggerating, as grumblers will.

"My money never did any thing for me, to speak of. I never sat for any place; politically, I'm no more than you. I *could*, of course, if I had liked it, but I never cared."

"You might have put *me* in for Dowcastle, instead of that fellow Dingley. I might have been some credit to you, and I would not have played you the trick he *did*, at all events," said Mark, in whose heart that wrong had long been festering.

"Now, that's very true, Mark, so I *might*; but you know you did not hint it till it was too late: however, that sort of thing can be made all straight by and by; our parliaments don't last forever."

Here was another sign of an auspicious change, for Mark knew very well how sharp and short had been Sir Roke's answer to the mediation he had employed in this matter of the borough of Dowcastle, and how he had pointedly said that "he wished Mark Shadwell were informed, once for all, that he did not think him in any respect suited to the House of Commons."

That evening as they stood near the fire in the drawing-room, Sir Roke sipping the chocolate which the accomplished Clewson prepared, for he was a little afraid of tea, and coffee was interdicted, said Mark, very low, on a sudden—he had been looking in a long reverie at Miss Agnes Marlyn, who was at the piano—

"She *is* beautiful!"

Mark's solitude had given him careless habits. As Sir Roke glanced sharply into his eyes with his shrewd, hard, mean eye, Shadwell would have given something to recall his words.

"Your daughter? Upon *that* question I shall certainly be found among the ayes."

"I think Miss *Marlyn* beautiful, at least very pretty, don't you?" said Mark dryly, and trying to rally.

"Miss Marlyn?" repeated Sir Roke, "oh! I know; yes, very well, very pretty indeed, very, but her style is by no means so uncommon. My cousin Rachel's beauty is more exquisite and more heavenly, I maintain."

Sir Roke was a little near-sighted, and through his tiny Parisian glasses he inspected the young lady at the piano for a moment, and then putting them down, he said to Mark: "So you admire Miss *Marlyn*; and I'm not *surprised*, she *is* very pretty."

There was nothing in this speech at all remarkable, nor any thing tangible in the manner of its utterance; but Mark was stung by it. He knew what was passing in Sir Roke's mind, and he fancied that he was aware of that fact and amused at it.

Mark Shadwell did not quite understand the pain he felt, nor even in what particular nerves

it was seated. He had no more pretensions to morality than other men who had lived, like him, an early life of dissipation. It was not worth his while to wear a mask before Roke, who knew him as well as *he* knew Roke; but a sentiment was combined with his mere admiration of Miss Agnes Marlyn; she was growing dear to him. If he had looked this secret in the face, I do not say that he would have had nerve to act as he ought; but he must have seen incidents in the situation enough to appall him. His pride was wounded on a sudden. He had unveiled to the lynx-eyed cynicism of Roke the secret which was almost a secret to his own soul. He was angry with *him*, angry also with *himself*—yes, *very* angry with himself—for was he not a philosopher? had he not long ago renounced the illusions of his youth? was he not a friar of the order of David Hume, as well as a theologian of the school of Voltaire?

Of the two men who stood side by side on the hearth-rug, I am quite sure that Sir Roke was the worst. Both of the earth earthy, unennobled by the only influence that can improve our sorry moral plight—Mark's nature, with its great faults, perversities, and early stains, was yet the better.

He had never been the cruel epicurean that Roke was. Generous and even tender impulses had visited him sometimes, and occasionally disturbed his selfishness, and something of passion had mingled in his early profligacy. Even now he was living partly in a delusion, and he loved, in his sharp debates with the Reverend Stour Temple, to challenge that severe censor to pick a hole in his morality. He liked sarcastically to pit himself against the vicar's best parishioners. He would have liked to make Roke speak out what he knew was in his mind, for the sake of answering him according to his temper. But Roke would do no such thing. He would enjoy his suspicion discreetly with an insulting reserve.

Miss Marlyn was playing still. Sir Roke approached Rachel, who, I suppose, did not receive him encouragingly, for in a few minutes he glided to the piano, and stood by the side of th performer. He beat time with a little wave of his hand, and smiled and whispered some thing; a compliment on her music, Mark assumed.

What he really said was this: "So you've been doing me a kind office with your pretty companion? she won't *speak* to me—she won't *look* at me. What sort of a person must she think me? You must allow me to view this in my own way, and to regard it as the best imaginable augury. Pray remember how very soon I shall be ordering my wings and be off to town. Was I very ill-tempered, to-day? I hope not."

Here came a great roulade, and the bass grew very loud; so that he contented himself with smiling and marking the time with a little oscillation of his hand.

Mark Shadwell, standing by the chimney-piece with his coffee-cup in his hand, looked at his invalid wife, to whose side by this time Sir Roke had transferred himself.

"That sneering beast thinks every fellow like himself. I *never* lived a life like his. I despise a man who does."

His glance wandered to Miss Agnes Marlyn, and then dropped to the ground; he leaned on the mantle-piece, and his reverie was of the afternoon, some time ago, when in that irregular apartment, hall, vestibule, all in one, of the Star and Garter, in the quaint High Street of Raby, waiting to see old Brent about his cob, the 'bus from the distant railway station set down a passenger at the open door, who entered in her cloak.

He knew nothing of her—he had forgotten all about Miss Marlyn's intended arrival. He saw a plain dress but a wonderfully beautiful girl, and he made way for her as for a princess. There is an impulse, not of admiration simply, but of *respect* in our first sight of a beautiful woman; because we intuitively reverence power of every kind, and beauty in a woman is power. The momentary scene was fixed in his mind for ever. In the shadow of that homely hall, so queerly misshapen, doors and galleries opening on it, the clumsy stairs mounting through an arch on one side, the bow-window of the bar projecting at the other, had appeared this young figure, and face, and all was glorified by her beauty.

"I have been like a *father* to her—a guardian—the shabby fellow!"

Mark Shadwell mentally presented himself with the most unexceptionable certificate; and with that in his pocket, glanced a contemptuous defiance at his kinsman, who smiled and chatted on, quite unconscious of the lightning that flickered so near him.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CARMEL SHERLOCK KNOCKS AT AMY'S DOOR.

MRS. SHADWELL went early that evening to her dressing-room. Dolly Wyndle, their usual conference ended, had gone about her business. With solitude came dejection. The sick lady, supporting her head upon her thin hand, began to think what would be when she was gone. "Agnes Marlyn will not desert my poor Rachel; wise above her years, and kind, I don't think Mark will disturb that. But then she is so young a creature; every way, difficulties. Perhaps Mark will go up to town and live there, as he always wished, leaving them here. He will marry very soon:" a pain thrilled her, though she smiled a forlorn little smile. "I wonder whether he will ever think of his poor little Amy! No one will ever love him so well again;" and her eyes filled with tears.

Poor little wandering soul—troubled about many things! Then came the thought of death. Oh! was her failing health, or the coming of that ghastly consummation, a frightful dream? A horror of great darkness, and the fears of death had fallen upon her, and there came the shuddering and wailing of panic. To this an awful calm succeeded, and she lifted up her clasped hands, and her eyes and her trembling heart to God in dumb supplication.

After awhile, in the silence that followed, came a sudden knock at her door.

"Who's there?" she asked, startled, for she heard no step approach the door.

"I, ma'am, *I*—Carmel Sherlock—shall I come in?"

"Come in."

And Carmel entered, looking very pale—indeed, like a swooning man.

"Thank you, ma'am—you're very good. I've something on my mind—something to say;" he closed the door, jealously looking at her all the while, with a very troubled face, and his large eyes fixed on her, as if in fear. "Don't be frightened, but I must go, ma'am; I must leave Raby. The place where I've been so happy—dreaming—*dreaming*," he groaned.

"What is it? What do you mean, Mr. Sherlock?" asked she, surprised.

"I'm come to say I must *go*, ma'am—I *must*," and he groaned again. "I must *go*; and I don't like to tell Mr. Shadwell—my benefactor—because it would cause a struggle; he would try to keep me; and if he were to succeed—oh! if?—I won't look at it; I must go *to-night*."

"Pray, Mr. Sherlock, be quite frank, and do let me know your reasons."

"Oh! ma'am—my dear, good lady, you mustn't ask—I *can't*. It isn't—it isn't to be told."

"But Mr. Shadwell will be so pained—you will be an irreparable loss. I really don't know what he's to do, if you leave him. Surely, you'll consider him—I know you will."

"I will—I do—I always do. I'm not ungrateful. I should have been cast away upon the wastes of misery, but for him. I owe him *all*—my *life*—my life—but this would never do. It scares me; it won't be battled with or denied; a whisper has caught my ear."

"One word of all this I can't understand," said she; "I hardly think you intend I should."

"Better not," he said, and clasped his hands hard together. "*So* many years, and to *frighten* you at last! No, no! it could not be."

"If any thing has happened to make you less happy then you were, I think you ought to tell me. It's very odd, and hardly kind to think of going away without assigning a reason—there's nothing that could possibly frighten me in any you are likely to give." She paused; but though she said this, she did feel a little nervous as well as curious; there was so much fear and anguish in Carmel's pallid countenance and dark stare.

"It *would* frighten you," he whispered; and looking round the cornice of the room, he laid the palm of his hand on his head, as if to control some pressure there. She remembered the sarcastic bulletins with which Mark Shadwell often favored her, to the effect that Carmel was growing decidedly madder and madder every day.

"Now, I've made up my mind, Mr. Sherlock," said she, with something of her old spirit, and shocked to think of his leaving at such an hour; "you'll stay to-night, whatever the cause; you won't go—at my earnest request, and as a kindness to me—you'll remain!"

"She does not *know*," Carmel groaned, "she doesn't, what she's doing! Why will she ask it—*dis iratis?* Oh! madam, you mustn't—oh! spare me that one command!"

"You must not go to-night—I *insist* upon it—don't think of it: in the morning you will see things differently. I entreat that you will grant me this one kindness."

There was a pause of a few seconds.

"I *will*, madam," said he, shaking his head, nevertheless, as if he had said "no."

"The day after to-morrow—you must stay till then; there are many things, you know, to arrange—you mustn't go till then. Promise this—you *shall* promise—I know you will!"

And, with these words, poor Mrs. Shadwell, who in her energy had risen from her sofa, took his hand kindly, and repeated her entreaty.

"I will, madam, I obey you in this; I promise—take it—my hand—*cruentum!* There—Good God, madam, my hand!" He withdrew it, and looked into her eyes with a very odd stare, and muttered: "Well were it for that man that he had never been born! My hand—it looks all wrong to me! I wish, ma'am, you had ordered me rather to get it smashed in a mill-crank!"

"Till the day after to-morrow, you have promised to remain," she said, passing by this odd parenthesis. "I am satisfied now, and thank you, Mr. Sherlock, thank you very much—and good-night."

"Good-night, madam. I am constrained—" He paused, with his hand on the door-handle, and looked at her as if on the point of speaking; after a few doubtful seconds, however, to her relief, he changed his mind, and, with a great sigh, he said merely "Good-night, madam," and left the room, closing the door gently, leaving her a great deal more excited and agitated than she had fancied herself during the flighty interview he had just given her. Odd he always was; but now, his language was wilder, was ominous, and sounded like the incipient mutterings of actual insanity. She was grieved and shocked, and felt on the point of bursting into tears.

"Poor, kind, gentle Carmel!—what can it be?" she wondered, as she stood very pale, where he had left her.

Very glad she was to hear a step approaching. This time it was her husband who entered.

"Oh, Mark, I'm so glad you have come. Poor Carmel Sherlock has been here, and seemed so excited, and talked so strangely."

"I told you, Amy, he's *odd*—you don't see so much of him as I do—a little bit *mad;* you would not believe me," and Mark laughed. But his merriment in her ear was not reassuring. It sounded like laughter heard in a dismal dream.

"Oh, Mark dear, you could not laugh if you knew how very strange he looked, and ill. I'm so afraid there's something very seriously wrong."

"Now, *come*," said Mark, a little inconsistently, "you must not be absurd. You fancy Carmel's mad—he's no more mad than you or I. He has very odd ways, I grant, and theories—it's merely solitude and reading, and this d—d wilderness; but with that dreamy way of his, he's as wide-awake and sharp as any lawyer in Westminster—you may take my word for it. I know him better than any man living—at accounts and business with him every day—as sound and clear a head as any in England—no more mad than the Lord Chancellor."

Mark was, in fact, arguing with himself, and blowing and brushing away the little uneasiness and suspicion that were, as his frightened wife spoke, gathering over his own mind.

"I promised to play a little piquet with Roke in his room to-night," he resumed; "he asked

me. You remember what I said yesterday about him—you do, of course. Now, all I say is this—you'll leave it entirely to *me;* and, mind, there's to be none of that talking him over, you know, that women are so fond of; by Jove! I only wonder any girl's ever married—they make a secret committee to sit on every fellow that pays them the least attention, and pick him to pieces, and laugh at him, till I wonder how any one of them has the face to marry him, and I'm certain that's the sole reason why half the disappointments take place that do. Now, mind, you mustn't allow it, nor any tattle of old Wyndle's, and Miss Marlyn must not be laughing with her over Roke's wrinkles, and nonsense, if he has any. All I say is this—just leave the matter in my hands. I'll speak to Rachel myself, if she's disposed to be foolish—she shan't be allowed to sacrifice herself. There isn't a girl coming out in London, next season, would refuse Roke Wycherly if he chose to ask her. Pretty stuff, indeed! Of course she's to be quite free—but—that's all."

Mark was talking more this night to Mrs. Shadwell than he had done for five weeks before. His head was full of this grand scheme, and it must be admitted, not without some color of evidence.

"I'm glad you think, Mark dear, that dear little Rachel should be left to herself if ever—"

"Of course, that's precisely what I say—leave her to her own decision. I'm certain, if Roke isn't pulled to pieces and talked over, as I've said, she'll decide like a girl of sense. She's not a fool."

And so on and on talked Mark, every now and then, by way of parenthesis, admitting that he spoke on hypothesis. At last there came a pause, during which the thoughts of both, by one of those old coincidences that we sometimes recognize, returned silently and suddenly to Carmel Sherlock. The lady was first to speak.

"Carmel Sherlock seems to have made up his mind to go."

"To leave us, do you mean?" asked Mark, looking up sharply—he could not spare Carmel.

"He wanted to go to-night, but promised to remain till the day after to-morrow. He would not tell me his reason. Don't you think, Mark, you should see him to-night?"

Now Mark had already made up his mind to do so. He said, therefore—

"I don't see much good in it; but if you *wish* it I will. We've had a long talk, Amy," he added, with the air of a man who had done a gracious thing, and knows it.

"Oh, Mark darling! it's very happy—it's like old times;" and as she spoke and smiled, her large eyes filled with tears.

He patted her cheek, and kissed her, not ardently, but kindly, and smiled on her encouragingly, and, said he: "You often mistake me, Amy. You think me cold and ungracious, when, Heaven knows, I'm only plagued to death with my worries and disappointments."

"It's kind of you, *darling*, to say so. I knew it—I was sure of it," she said, putting her pretty hands on his shoulders, and looking up in his face, and smiling and crying at the same time; and, smoothing her hair with a caress, he looked down in return with a relenting and a commiseration that were strange to him. "I don't know why I'm crying. I'm such a fool; I'm so happy, Mark. Don't mind my crying—I can't help it. I never was so happy, I think."

Few acts, as we know, are done on a single motive, and the origin even of our emotions is not always absolutely explicable to ourselves. Something of compunction, a sudden recoil to self-upbraiding to-night in the drawing-room, as I mentioned, prompted a recognition like this; but I do not know that the impulse would have had strength at this hour to bring him to her room, had it not been for the necessity he was under of finding some one to listen to his confidences and speculations respecting the intentions of his kinsman.

He went away, pleased with his own great attributes and with that instinct of self-approbation which stood him instead of a conscience, altogether gratified and glowing.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A HAND ON ROKE WYCHERLY'S DOOR.

MARK, candle in hand, walked down the sombre passage charmed with himself. He thought it a pity that the Reverend Stour Temple, that well-meaning, bigoted vicar, could not witness this triumph of philosophy. He had made a condescension to that poor wife who, with all her infirmities, was so infinitely his superior. He had patted her cheek, smoothed her hair, kissed her, and was in a manner reconciled. Yes, reconciled; for was she not always and unaccountably, as it were, in disgrace?

Gross are we, and measure our virtues and our gratitude, not by the motive of the service, but by its magnitude. Always reversing where it suits us the moral of the widow's mite—not even by the magnitude of the service, where that will not do, but by the wild gratitude of despair.

Our theatric virtues strut their hour, and the applause of the gallery roars above them. But God sees with an awful eye, and it is the whisper of self-suspicion that reverberates before His throne in thunder. He knows the dynamics of all morals, and measures the momentum of good-will, not by visible results, but by the unseen resistance it has overcome.

Mark Shadwell had observed a shyness in Rachel's manner toward the baronet which led him to think that Sir Roke must have talked in a strain of gallantry. All the better—proof upon proof. He was also in high good humor with himself, and confident in his philosophic self-control. Prospects were brightening. His debts could not plague him as they had done any longer; and was not the House of Commons opening to receive the coming man?

Aglow with this moral tipsiness, who should he encounter at the turn of the gallery but his daughter and Miss Agnes Marlyn?

He paused for a moment, said a few words, and bid them good-night. How was it that this Agnes grew more and more beautiful every day? The girl is gentler, shyer, different somehow. He had seen her eyes follow him in the drawing-room when, at least, he *thought she* fancied he did not observe her. He had seen her blush, he could almost swear, twice on meeting him unexpectedly. There was something sub-

missive, sad, strange in her manner of late. How she liked working for him, and tried to please him! and how beautifully gratified she looked when he thanked and praised her! Poor little thing! Just a fancy. Well for himself—for *all*—he was so cool-headed a fellow! Well that he had burned his fingers, and seared them so early that he could afford to play with fire.

"My secretary certainly is *beautiful!* How interesting—how sad! Who could withhold compassion?"

And he sighed. Who sighed? A benevolent philosopher simply, in that sigh, exhaled only ardent pity. He walked on with the image of that beautiful secretary before him. He knocked at Carmel Sherlock's door, and opened it. That eccentric gentleman rose suddenly to his feet as he did so. He spoke not—only gazed with a pale frown across the table, as if on the entrance of a thief in the night. A book was opened before him. Oddly enough, it was the Bible.

"Didn't expect me, Sherlock? Passing this way, so I just looked in."

"Thankful, sir, always, when you do."

"Reading?"

"Yes, sir, reading—the Bible, sir."

"Hey? That's something new, isn't it?"

"Oh dear me! *No*, sir. As good philosophy as you'll find anywhere, and more ancient. I like it. I always look into it. Why should the Bible be the only book we can take nothing out of? There is something in every book—every ancient book—written when it was troublesome to write, and no one read but the critical."

In the midst of his scepticism, Mark Shadwell had a lurking awe of this mysterious book. In the tremendous perspective which it opened, there was no pleasant place for him, and he shut it down with something between a curse and a scoff.

"Ho! That will be very agreeable news to the vicar," said Mark, sarcastically.

"There's the Christian Trinity, you know, and the Platonic. There's a fundamental triplet somewhere, sir, or the triplet would not rule as it does. If there is a noon, you see there must be a forenoon and an afternoon. In limited life, which is the first process, the acme will have its antecedent and its consequent. The order is, desire, fruition, satiety, or, in other words, incipiency, power, decay—that is, you know, childhood, manhood, age. I see, sir, you are listening."

"Yes, certainly," said Mark, who had been thinking of something else.

"And you follow me—quite?"

"The devil I do!"

"Don't you, sir?"

"Pray lead on, my good fellow. I'm stuck in the mud; but never mind, I'm doing my best."

"But the unlimited life triplicates also," said Carmel, unconscious of Mark's banter. "Self-evolution is exhausted in three. There is no mutation after the worm, the grub, and the fly. The act of death, you know, is the labor of the man in the flesh, and the bringing forth of the intermediate man, who in turn evolves the man immutable. It is the law of fermentation—saccharine, vinous, acetous. Two processes of life, leading up to finality. This present state in the flesh is the first subterranean germination of life, compared with the next, feeble, inapprehensive, and ugly."

"And yet I've seen some rather pretty specimens," said Mark. He was speaking in the glow of that beautiful phantom of Agnes Marlyn, which still stood before him, though laughing at Carmel.

"This self-evolution, in triplet, is a moral law, desert, judgment, execution; the moral life is self-evolving. It projects a second state from its first, and a third, which is final, from the second," said Carmel Sherlock, looking vaguely downward, and tracing slow lines with his finger-tip along his pallid forehead.

"People grow from indifference to like one another; eh? and so on?" said Mark. He was thinking of Agnes Marlyn still, "and sometimes into indifference again. That's a great discovery—is it in the Bible?" Mark was quizzing him gravely.

"Just this, now," continued Sherlock, lifting his tattered Bible and reading—'When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth Death.'"

"In the Bible that, is it?" asked Mark, smiling.

"Yes, sir, here, in the Epistle of James. The triplicate self-evolution, lust—sin—death!" answered Carmel; and read the awful passage again, aloud. "I'll show you how that must be—"

"Well, I believe we'll not mind to-night. I told you before, my creed is dust to dust," said Mark.

"Don't you believe in a resurrection?" asked Carmel.

"Of the body?" inquired Mark, preparing to go.

"Yes—*I* do—of the body," said Carmel.

"*Nous verrons*," said Mark; "and for the present, I must remain in darkness; I mean, I can hear no more to-night."

It was clear that Carmel did not mean to open his plan of going away, and Mark was now satisfied that Sherlock's idea of leaving him was one of the many vapors that rose in his solitude, and, crossing his mind, dissolved and came no more.

"What a fellow that is!" he thought, sneeringly, as he retraced the gallery alone. Mark was not quite in the contemptuous mood he fancied. That text had an odd mystic sound in it that was uncomfortable. There had risen something dark, now, a little in the way of that glowing phantom of Agnes Marlyn. In the midst of Carmel's babble, a pale, pure head had looked in at the door and startled him. In the midst of his gentle maunderings, a stern diapason had broken in, and rang still in his ears.

So Mark shook his ears, and hummed a tune lightly, and went and paid his visit to Roke Wycherly in his dressing-room; they chatted pleasantly, and then they played piquet.

Mark won—what some people would think a considerable sum—it was only some twenty pounds. It was nothing in the scale of old exploits. But guineas were welcome as drops of water in the desert to needy Mark, and is it not always pleasant to win?

"You'll come to-morrow night again, won't you?" said Sir Roke as he smiled feebly in Mark's face from his easy chair.

It is not always the loss, but the mortification of defeat, that tries temper. Roke did not care for this game, nor for any other, for its own sake. He rather wished that Mark should be pleased with his visit, and was glad that he had won. And Mark's feelings toward him got into a state of equilibrium. He fancied as he left him that he could even come almost to like Roke. On such small things do likings and antipathies depend; and is not this just, considering how seldom the great things turn up, if ever, and how minute are the bits which make up the mosaic of a whole life?

Very late that night, Sir Roke, whose sleep was light, awoke. He fancied he heard a step on the gallery floor. He listened, with an ugly frown, on his pillow. And then—he could not be quite sure—he heard a hand laid softly on the panel of his door, and brushed gently along it. Sir Roke lifted his head. The hand seized the door-handle and began to turn it gently.

"Who the devil's there?" cried Sir Roke on his elbow, and stretching his lean neck over the side of the bed.

There was no answer. He thought he heard breathing. He was sure he heard a soft retreating step. He was one of those persons who can't endure any trifling with the sanctity of sleep; it made him furious. Spluttering some ejaculations which I don't repeat, he had already got the bell-rope in his fingers, to ring up Clewson and take his revenge upon that harmless slumberer, when, on a sudden, his mood quite changed, the bell-rope dropped back upon the wall.

"By Jove, it's possible—quite—what a fool!" And he jumped out of bed in his long night-shirt and silk night-cap—a figure something like that of the Knight of La Mancha, when he fought his nocturnal combat with the cats, if you can imagine that Christian gentleman with a very wicked smirk on—and wrapping his silk dressing-gown about him, and forgetting night air and all else, he opened his door softly, still smirking in the dark, and looking and whispering up and down the gallery, "I'm here, does any one want me?" and so at last to bed again, rather cold and cross.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MR. CLEWSON CONFERS WITH CARMEL SHERLOCK.

Mr. Clewson had formed a slight acquaintance, in the housekeeper's room, with our friend Carmel Sherlock, and had often, to Mrs. Dolly Wyndle, expressed his high estimation of Mr. Sherlock's erudition and wisdom, for he had quoted languages which that gentleman had never heard before, and ventilated theories, the futile endeavor to comprehend which had a rather fatuising effect upon his practical intellect.

He met Sherlock next morning on the back stair, by the great window on the landing-place, and respectfully wished him good-morning.

"Ho! sir, I hope you slept well," said Carmel, looking wofully in his face. "For my part, sir, I've had a bad night—no sleep—only a *thought*—the same—*one* thought—a load, as you lie, always increasing, like the '*peine fort et dur*,' till it breaks your heart. Sir, it's like the drop of water—tick, tick, tick—on your brain—that the Inquisition invented; and you must go mad or submit, sir, eh?"

"Quite so, sir," assented Mr. Clewson, who apprehended but vaguely. "My gentleman, he always takes hopium, in little lozenges like; I can give you two or three—or try counting up a thousand or so."

"I don't want sleep, sir. It's only that, don't you see, if the idea would change; but all one thought, never pausing, like one fiddle-string in your brain, and a bow as long as forever, drawn on, and on, and on—it's too much—you're sure to submit; it has you at last."

"Just so, sir, a want of variety; every one tires of sameness like. I do uncommon," said Mr. Clewson.

"When does he go?" said Carmel.

"Sir Roke?"

"Ay, yes—Sir Roke—he should go to-day," said Carmel.

"I don't think Sir Roke has no notion of going so soon," answered Mr. Clewson.

"He's here for no good, sir," said Sherlock.

"You really *think?*" inquired Mr. Clewson, in a confidential tone and with a shrewd look, and something like the dawn of a smile.

"Can't you get him away? In God's name get him away!" urged Carmel, laying his hand upon his arm, and grasping it with a little shake.

Mr. Clewson smiled a little, and said he—

"It's not me takes him, but rayther him that takes me sir."

Carmel sighed, and said—

"Look, sir; every man has a side to the light, and a side to the dark; his shadow goes with him. I wish he had stayed away. Can't you do *any* thing?" said Carmel in great trouble, as it seemed.

Mr. Clewson shook his head, amused at the idea.

"My sleep, sir, while I had it, was all like a church window, with dreams glowing all over with allegories. I told my beloved master something of it; but I'm worn out, sir, I'm tired."

"And what may be running in your mind, sir?" inquired Mr. Clewson, being curious.

Carmel looked at him suddenly, with a contracted and suspicious gaze, and dropped his eyes.

"About what?" said Carmel, dryly, looking up again.

"I mean about Sir Roke, sir," said Clewson.

"I know nothing about Sir Roke Wycherly; and so you're going to *stay?* Well, you know, you ought to go and see something of the scenery—Wynderfel and Hazelden—and other views of places worth seeing. Will he go away tomorrow?"

"Sir Roke?"

Carmel nodded.

"Well, I know no more than you, Mr. Sherlock; I never knows, sir, except a haccident, where or when we're agoing, until he gives me the order to git things ready and pack up."

"Something came into the house with him."

"You *may* say that, Mr. Sherlock; all them portmanteaus and boxes—awful particlar—no one living, sir, has a hidea what it is, I tell you."

"Troublesome, sir," acquiesced Sherlock.

"Rayther, I should say, a few," answered Mr

Clewson, shaking his head with a pathetic comicality.

"And don't you know what he came here for, Mr. Clewson?" asked Carmel, with a bitter smile.

"No, I don't, sir," answered Mr. Clewson.

Carmel looked at him.

"*No*, really, sir. It may be many things. I don't know. I give you my honor," he averred, and shook his head.

"Well, *I* know," said Carmel, smiling darkly out of the window. "He's come here for a wife."

"Oh, oh! I see. I'm not a bit surprised, I *thought* so," answered Clewson, who *was* very much surprised, and uneasy too; for he could not say how such an event as marriage might shake him in his place, and his place suited him; and, in fact, was on the whole a good deal better than any he was likely to get again. Therefore he was shocked, though he did not believe it.

"And who—who may he be a-looking after?" inquired Mr. Clewson.

"Miss Rachel Shadwell," answered Carmel, hastily, as if he were mentioning a dead friend, and still looking straight out of the window.

"I partly guessed it; there's several things has led me to that opinion. Is she likely to turn out a hinterfering person, do you think?"

"Miss Rachel is perfection," said Carmel.

"I didn't mean nothing contrary," said Clewson.

"Think of such a man as that coming to marry her!" said Sherlock.

"Well, it is a lift for her," observed Mr. Clewson. "A very desirable halliance. He's took a vilent fancy, I dessay; he's that sort—"

"L'amour arrive en chantant,
Et s'en retourne en pleurant,"

repeated Carmel, rather to himself than to his companion. "You may have read that—why not? French. Yes, he knows French; it's in the *Morte d'Arthur*, and it's very true."

And so Mr. Clewson went up and Mr. Sherlock down, and the little conference at the large window on the lobby came to an end.

The Reverend Stour Temple paid a visit early next day at Raby. The two young ladies, Sir Roke, and Mark Shadwell, were at luncheon very sociably; and at this irregular meal, the vicar joined them in the dining-room.

Mark did not like the vicar, but he welcomed him courteously.

"You remember Roke Wycherly? Roke, *you* recollect Temple, at Oxford?"

Sir Roke gave him two fingers, and one of his bleak smiles, as he looked up at him from his chair.

"Charmed to see you, Temple; it's so many years. Pray don't count them. And you're at Ridleston, here, Mark tells me. You were good at most things; you pulled a very good oar, and I remember you were a capital wicket-keeper. No cricket nowadays, I dare say?"

Stour Temple smiled with a sad and supercilious complacency over these recollections of his prowess.

"Never played since I took orders. I suppose I could not stop a ball now. I've an objection to clergymen playing."

"I don't see why they shouldn't," said Sir Roke; "they want exercise as much as laymen, I fancy, and it would prevent their growing so fat as some of them do."

"My duties afford me exercise enough," he replied with a smile; "by the time I get home, I shall have walked fourteen or fifteen miles."

"I wish they were all as active as you, Temple. I've a fellow down at Scarbrook; he rides at a walk on a horrid cob, and he's as fat as I don't know what; never visits his people, nor does a bit of good, from one year's end to another. I wish the brute would get his apoplexy, and make a vacancy for a useful man like you."

The Reverend Stour Temple looked not flattered, but very grave, and even stern, and Mark thought, with some pleasure, that he was on the point of rebuking the baronet, whose temper might have exploded under that liberty, but it did not come, *then*, at least.

The Reverend Stour Temple had not been five minutes in the room, indeed, when Mark perceived that there was something upon his mind. He was silent and thoughtful, and being an abstemious man, luncheon was to him a ceremony quickly over.

"How pretty the old Tower of Raby and the village look from the summit of the wood!" said the vicar, awakening from a reverie, and speaking apropos of nothing. "There's a market there to-day. I crossed the uplands, and you can't think how pretty it looks, lying among the trees and enclosures beneath you. It would almost repay the walk, if you would venture so long a ramble," he smiled, as he spoke to Rachel. "There are very fine clouds, too, to-day for a background; such towering piles of vapor! I should have suspected thunder, but that it would be too soon. It's hardly ten days since we had that thunder-storm."

"More than a fortnight," said Mark Shadwell.

"Ha?" said the vicar. "Time cheats us, Sir Roke, in the country."

"Suppose we make that our walk?" said Rachel, addressing Miss Marlyn.

"Mr. Temple says it looks so well. I should like very much," she said, with a timid glance toward the clergyman.

He made, however, no sort of answer to this little overture, and said to Mark—

"I crossed from Pennelston; that poor man I spoke to you about died this morning."

"Oh, did he?—poor fellow!" said Mark, with a slight flush, and looking at the landscape through the window. He thought Stour Temple's cold eyes were upon him, and I rather think he had forgotten all about the farmer of Pennelston and his wants. "Very sorry, poor fellow! You mustn't go, Temple, I'll be back in a moment, only to write a note in the study."

This Mark Shadwell said with the intention of seeing the vicar no more that day; for he was always uncomfortable in his presence, and so had made a step or two toward the door, when the vicar said—

"Will yon excuse my asking just two or three minutes with you, in the study? only a word or two."

"Certainly," said Shadwell, as cheerfully as he could, "whenever you please."

He crossed the hall, vexed and in a petty sus-

pense that irritated him, shut his study-door rather sharply behind him, walked across it, pulled out an old quarto, and read with a sour countenance on its back the harmless inscription, "Histoire des Voyages, tom. viii.," and having read it several times over, he threw it on the table a little roughly.

"That fellow's a sort of irritant," he said. "I never met him yet that he hadn't something to pester about. I wonder what it is *now?*"

Intuitively Mark Shadwell felt that it was something more than usually annoying.

CHAPTER XXX.

A WARNING WORD.

The vicar, meanwhile, loitered away a few minutes beside Sir Roke in the dining-room window, to allow Shadwell time to write his imaginary note.

"I heard, Sir Roke, that you were here."

"Oh!" said Sir Roke, with one of his smiles and faint bows.

"And I should have been over here to pay my respects before now, had my time been my own."

Sir Roke smiled and bowed a little, and laid his hand upon his arm.

"My dear Temple, I should not have stood on ceremony with you," said he. "I meant to run over to the vicarage—which, I am told, is quite a little paradise—and see you before I left the country."

"Very good of you," answered the vicar. "I've been anxious to see you from the moment I heard you were here. I've been wishing very much to speak to you. He looked on Sir Roke for a moment as if he were on the point of opening his case, whatever it might be; but the young ladies were chatting in the room, and, after a moment's reflection, he continued—"I came to-day hardly hoping for an opportunity, and I thought it, on the whole, a better plan to write what was in my mind, and—I've put it in this letter."

Sir Roke nodded affably as he took it.

"And, I'm afraid, it's tedious; but will you kindly read it through?" said the vicar.

"Certainly—rely upon me—every syllable—and give it my best attention too," answered Sir Roke, graciously.

That's all I ask, Sir Roke," replied Stour Temple.

"How grand that fellow looks! That letter's to ask me for the presentation to Scarbrook; and you'd fancy he was going to ask my leave to build a church or a hospital. Sanctimonious rogues!" So thought Sir Roke, and said aloud, "I'll not open it *now*, dear Temple; I'll wait for a quiet opportunity; isn't it better?"

"Certainly!" acquiesced he; "and it's time I were going."

So the Reverend Stour Temple took his leave, and went direct to the well-known door of Shadwell's study, and found that gentleman awaiting him impatiently.

"Well, Temple, what is it? I've been playing the devil somehow, and somewhere, or *you* wouldn't have something particular to tell me. Pray go on; I'm prepared for something uncomfortable," and he laughed a little viciously.

"Sorry my mission is not generally pleasanter," said the vicar; "but you mistake me now. I'm not going to blame any one. I've sought this opportunity only to say a word of *warning*."

"Well, thank you—I'm all ear," he replied, as gayly as he could.

"I have had a letter from a friend—a resident at Darmonville—and I think I'm bound to tell you that it concerns Miss Agnes Marlyn, now domesticated in your family, and that it conveys a *rather*—in my mind—a *very* unfavorable impression of that young lady."

"That's very odd!" said Mark, sharply, and looking rather aghast.

"Not so odd in a *French* boarding-school as it might in an English one," said the Reverend Stour Temple. "Recollect, I say only *unfavorable*. What I have to report does *not* amount to criminality. God forbid I should seem to intend more than I have warrant for; but her conduct there was characterized by great deceit and unpardonable indiscretion."

Mark Shadwell looked full in the vicar's eyes, rather pale, and he seemed altogether more shocked than a man of the world might have been expected to be, on learning that a young governess had been, in matters of mere decorum, a degree less discreet than seemed fit to the Reverend Stour Temple.

"It seems odd we should hear it in this roundabout way; and it strikes me as a little too vague and intangible to consist quite with the laws of fair-play—to say nothing of charity," said he, with a rather dubious sneer, after a little pause.

"It reaches you in a circuitous way, because Miss Marlyn was recommended in the absence of the principal of the school, Madame de la Perriere, who rightly or wrongly, was afterward reluctant to disturb Miss Marlyn's position here, hoping that she would conduct herself with more discretion in your house."

"And nothing could be more *unexceptionable*," interposed Mark Shadwell.

"And so far from being vague, the statement is very precise indeed. The young lady is ascertained to have let herself out of the school at night, on no less than five several occasions, by means of a key improperly obtained. On three of these occasions she met the friend or agent of a gentleman, whom Madame de la Perriere says she believes, or *hopes*, to have been seeking her privately in marriage; and on the two last occasions she met the gentleman himself, in the house, however, of Madame Du Bois, a shoemaker. This woman used to meet her at the wicket of the school-garden, conduct her to and from her house—so they say—and remain in the room during the entire interview; and, with the exception of this piece of—what shall I term it?—this Madame Du Bois was always accounted a person of unexceptionable good conduct. These are the facts, so far as they are known; and to that extent, they seem to me positively reprehensible as well as *suspicious;* and it seemed to me right that you should be made aware of the particulars of the impropriety of which the young person now placed in an intimacy with Miss Shadwell is capable."

"Well—ha!—yes—I still can hardly believe it. If Miss Marlyn is not a fit person to be here, what business had those people sending her? Of course, if we begin angling for stories and

gossip, we'll get enough of them. I think I did all that was right when I applied to the head of the school; and there has been a very good account of her, and she has been every thing we could wish since she has been here, and I do wish people would not wait until all the expense has been gone to of bringing her over to this *delicious* place, and then begin collecting—I mean sending over—the tattle of an idle French town, and expect me—who haven't a guinea, by Jove!—to throw away money by handfuls, for no better reason."

"The occurrences I have mentioned are perfectly ascertained," said the vicar, whose cold self-possession was never ruffled by Mark Shadwell's hard words. "If the statement consisted of mere gossip, as you suppose, I should not have troubled you with it—I should not have repeated it anywhere, and I should not have given it a moment's consideration myself; but all I have related is *true;* and were *I* the head of a household in which Miss Marlyn filled the delicate and important place which she occupies here, I should at once withdraw my confidence, and no consideration would induce me to retain her services."

"Yes, that's all very fine!" said Mark Shadwell; "nothing easier than managing imaginary families, and lecturing other people on their duties, and practicing all the virtues of the decalogue by proxy."

Mark Shadwell was always irritated by the officious morality of the vicar, and by his unaffected serenity under his attacks. It was an assumption of superiority, and galled his pride.

"Of course, I'm a mere child," he went on, "I know, and quite below the serious notice of a divine of the Church of England; but I may be supposed to know something about my own affairs. Miss Marlyn is, so far as I can see, quite a lady. We have found her perfectly satisfactory, and she has been a companion to my poor wife in her solitude, and very kind, and I really don't know how *she* could get on without her."

The Reverend Stour Temple remained provokingly silent and attentive, and, as usual, Mark's choler rose.

"And I don't see, with you, that making common allowance for exaggeration, there's any case for turning this young lady adrift on the world; I think, on the contrary, it would be monstrous. Of course, I'll consider it; I'll talk it over with my wife. You have not spoken to her, have you?" he asked, sharply.

"Certainly not," answered the vicar.

"No—*I'm* the proper person to do that, I fancy."

"Of course," said the clergyman.

"And, in fact, I shall leave the whole thing very much in her hands."

"I've now done, I *hope*, at least, my duty; and, I may add, a very *painful* one. I did not seek the information I have communicated; but, having received it, I could not in conscience reserve it from you."

"No—well, it's off your mind now, and *we* can best advise about it, don't you think—my wife and I?"

The vicar answered nothing, he only bowed; and said he—

"I shan't interrupt you farther, I must go; how long, by the bye, does Sir Roke remain here?"

"Two or three days."

"Farewell."

Mark Shadwell walked with him to the steps, and standing above his demi-griffins, nodded and kissed his hand, with a very sombre countenance, to the retreating vicar.

Mark was indeed very much disturbed. He had not the slightest notion of telling this story, elaborately, to his wife. "Women do run away with things so." Neither had he a thought of dismissing Miss Marlyn. But a responsibility was cast upon him which he hated; also a doubt troubled him to a degree which he could not have anticipated. How had the vicar learned this? He might know a great deal more; that is, detail—particulars, which, although they did not affect the moral of the story, yet interested him intensely.

"I say, Temple," he called after the vicar, following him; "one word."

The clergyman turned about and paused.

"I forgot; you'll be returning this way, shan't you? just about our dinner-hour—you must come and dine with us—you really *must*."

"You're very good, but I fear—"

"*Pray* do—it will be really a kindness. I make it a point; you *won't* refuse."

"You are very kind," repeated Stour Temple, looking down for a moment on the grass by his feet, and thinking.

"Yes, you *will* come?"

"Very well—*yes*—many thanks," said the vicar; and with a second farewell he took his departure, and Mark Shadwell stood for a while looking after his receding figure, not knowing, quite distinctly, why it was that so trifling a story had so utterly confounded him.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE VICAR TAKES HIS HAT.

Sir Roke Wycherly took a little desultory walk with the young ladies, and was very chatty and agreeable; directing, however, his conversation principally, as perhaps was natural, to Rachel, who was beginning to get over the little shock of her companion's absurd conversation of yesterday.

It was not until Sir Roke had ended, for that bout, his compliments and gayeties, and put off his smiles and his walking-coat, in his dressing-room, and collapsed on a sudden into that bitter, peevish, and formidable man of snarls, scowls, and wrinkles, with whom Mr. Clewson had to do, that he saw and remembered the letter which the Reverend Stour Temple had placed in his hand. He enjoyed a certain sort of psychology, and broke the seal with an anticipation of amusement.

Nothing akin to amusement awaited him, however. The supercilious radiance with which he had opened it vanished before he had read half a dozen lines, and gradually his face darkened and corrugated like that of an angry monkey.

Mr. Clewson, making arrangements at the dressing-table, heard distinctly the hissings and splutterings of the high pressure.

Sir Roke folded the letter but half read, and with a hand that trembled with anger thrust it into his dressing-gown pocket.

The fact is, there was a shadow of disappointment, if not of dismay, in the rage that agitated Sir Roke's countenance.

"Upon my soul, Mr. Stour Temple, you've got on a bit since I had last the pleasure of meeting you! You are one of those saints whose religion is made up of fire and brimstone, and impertinence—you—and think you may insult any one in any way that pleases your vulgar arrogance, provided you do it in the name of the Trinity!"

If at this moment Sir Roke had encountered the vicar, he would have given him a piece of his mind, together with some expletives better omitted. But the baronet, except when his virulent temper overcame him, was a particularly cool man; without natural affection, without impracticable resentments, with all his malignities under the supreme guidance and control of convenience.

By dinner-time he had cooled down perfectly. Disliking the vicar intensely, he was not in the slightest danger of meeting him with any evidences of irritation.

The Reverend Stour Temple was there, and sat beside Amy Shadwell, with whom he talked, and very little with the other guests: unusually grave, and, at times, abstracted; and was not Mark Shadwell more silent, too, than usual? Had it not been for Sir Roke, indeed, the tide of conversation would have ebbed utterly, and all lain flat, black, and dismal.

"I think you walk too much. Are not you overdoing it a little, Temple?" said his host, observing his look of fatigue. "Take some sherry—that light wine is nothing when one's tired."

"Thanks," said he, "I *am* a little knocked up. Two years since I shouldn't have found that walk too much; I'm afraid I must acknowledge the hand of Time, and shorten my walks."

"Charming walks—a temptation always to do too much. But the air here is quite an elixir; *I* feel it so," said Sir Roke, who ignored decay, and abhorred mortality, and was always disposed to be testy when those ideas were pressed into prominence.

"That death is a stranger here," said the vicar, "and the Bible so far justified, is I think in nothing more clear than in the difficulty we experience in presenting the event, as a fact, to our understandings; the great truth is written in awful characters in every church-yard; proclaimed in every hour's retrospect by the broken and disappearing ranks of early friends; printed day by day, among all the vulgarities of life, in every newspaper; every black-craped hat or bonnet we see is a signal that the dread event has happened recently and near us; all nature speaks by signs and allegories, and all our social relations, with a tremendous distinctness, of *death;* and yet how hard it is, for five consecutive minutes, to accept it as a certain incident of our position! so that we have reason to thank God for those other intimations of its approach, which are furnished in the evidences of decaying vigor and subsiding life."

"Isn't it—surrounded as we are with blessings—an odd subject to select for thankfulness?" said Sir Roke, with a little shrug and a bitter smirk. "For my part, I thank Heaven for quite other things."

"For other things, and for that, also, since die we must; well that we should have every help to keep it in mind, for judgment follows death, and here sit we three; and very trite it is, but true, that this time twelve months one of us may lie in the grave!"

As I have said, Sir Roke hated death worse, I am afraid, than worse things, and he thought the vicar detestably ill-bred in pressing the topic as he did. The baronet, therefore, could brook this no longer, and he took up his parable, and said—

"Quite on the cards, though *I'm* a great deal better than I was this time last year; and growing better, too, every week, thank God. I'm sorry *you* can't give so good an account of yourself. But whatever happens we must bear it, you know, and there's no good, that I can see, in plaguing one another about possible occurrences, which are certainly not meant to turn us from the business, and blessings, and—and duties of life, till they do come. Life's our business, and *meant* to be our business, here, in my opinion. It's no news, you'll pardon me for saying so, to tell us we're to *die*. Death's no *discovery;* I'm to die, and *you're* to die. *You're* to die as well as Mark there. I hope you think about it, if it does you good. Your death's your own affair, whenever it comes, and mine's mine; and I don't want to plague you and Mark about it, and I *won't*." And Sir Roke took the claret, filled his glass, and looked across the table a little defiantly at the vicar, who sat under fire like a veteran.

"When I want medical advice, I send for a doctor," said Sir Roke, softening a little, and descending, as he did so, into a hackneyed parallel—"and when I want religion I'll send for a clergyman, and for none would I more readily than for *you*. But I think for myself, you understand, upon these subjects. The genius of our Church is liberty, you know; that's my view."

Thus Sir Roke wrested the conversation forcibly into another channel. Mark dropped in, and the vicar dropped out, and so for a while, rather uncomfortably and with a sort of effort, of which they all soon tired, the discourse dragged on over their wine. Each had matters connected with the other to think over, and the conversation was often on the verge of subsiding into silence.

As Sir Roke and the vicar walked into the drawing-room side by side, the baronet said in a low and friendly tone—

"I read your note, my dear Temple, and you must pardon me for saying, I've seldom been so much puzzled, and so much amused; you've fallen into a most diverting mistake. I could not think, at first, what you meant; somebody has been mystifying you."

The vicar looked in his face with a very grave surprise, but made no answer, only bowed.

"I'll take an opportunity to-morrow; I'll go over to see you, and I'll make it as clear to you as day-light; there never *was*, you could not have *conceived*, any thing more preposterous. I wished to say so much now; I don't choose my friends to think worse of me than I deserve—even for an hour."

Sir Roke laid his hand in a friendly way on the arm of the vicar, who, however, looked down still without returning his friendly glance, and with the expression of a man who is distressed, and wishes an irksome subject at rest.

"You won't say you *believe* me, but I know you *do*, and I'll make you confess it to-morrow, when I see you. In the mean time, although, upon my honor, you have been quite in the clouds upon this subject, I assure you, I respect and I like you, Temple, for having written as you did—I do, indeed."

The Reverend Stour Temple bowed very gravely again. Sir Roke might as well have spared his flatteries. There was no response.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A KNOCK AT SIR ROKE'S DOOR.

MARK SHADWELL talked a good deal with the vicar in the drawing-room. The ladies made music and sang at the piano. Sir Roke was smiling and agreeable, and flitted from Rachel to her mamma, and from her mamma to Rachel again. Mark Shadwell shaking himself now and then free of his perplexities, almost wondered why he was so disturbed, wondered with a feeling at once of ridicule and fear, half hated himself as he looked at Agnes Marlyn, who acquiesced with a cold unconscious pride in the neglect to which she seemed abandoned that night, half hated *her*, yet, in his compassion, he was tempted to go over and tell her how sweet her music was, and rescue her from the prolonged insult of that neglect, but somehow his heart failed him. Mrs. Shadwell on a sudden perceived it, praised her music, and asked her the usual questions about it and its composer, and so forth; and shortly after, Miss Marlyn, with a few whispered words to Mrs. Shadwell, and a smile, glided from the room, happily unconscious, it seemed, of having been overlooked and forgotten.

Ten minutes later the vicar took his leave, and the little party broke up. Mark Shadwell walked with him to the gate. They strode along silently for a good way.

"Sir Roke seems to enjoy his visit very much," said the vicar at last; but like a man rather asking a question than stating a fact. "Your quiet rational life must be a change to him."

"And you wonder how he can endure its dullness?" said Mark with a laugh; "so do I, but any thing may be endured for a day or two, and Roke does not mean to stay longer."

"Oh! has he said so?"

"Yes—*why?*" asked Mark, struck by something in his companion's tone. "I think he said he meant to go on the day after to-morrow."

"Have you any idea where he goes then?" asked the clergyman.

"To Scarbrook, I think; you seem to take an interest in him, Temple; do you think of sending him a tract on death and judgment, or some little reminder of the sort? I'm sure he'll read it."

"I shan't trouble him with tracts, because I know he would *not* read them, and *would* think me a fool, and so any little chance that our conversation of to-night, or of any other time, might have, would be lost."

Mark smiled to himself, thinking that Stour Temple had actually thought over the tract, and been busy about Sir Roke's spiritual concerns.

"I'm afraid you may as well leave that erring and straying sheep to walk his own way, a perverse disciple like me, only I don't think Roke has any philosophy, except the hand-to-mouth one of extracting from life, day by day, all the pleasure he can, a rule which, except indeed in coming to Raby, I don't think I ever knew him offend against. I've some reason, however, to think that he begins to find that way of life a little tiresome, and he's talking of a quieter one, but I don't know; have you often known a man of that kind settle down and marry?"

"Yes, I've known two or three; not that they all make good husbands," answered the vicar.

"I dare say not; so have I, some," said Mark.

"They don't always make good husbands," he might have said, "but they do make good settlements sometimes;" and that I am afraid is what he was principally thinking of.

"When will you be coming this way again, Temple?" asked Mark, who wished to ask him more closely about the story of Miss Marlyn's school-days, and yet somehow could not this night.

Temple smiled.

"I wish you would look in a little oftener," said Mark, who interpreted that smile aright, and felt the rebuke more than his pride would quite acknowledge.

"Thank you very much, but my walks are quite uncertain; their direction is often controlled by that most capricious, humanly speaking, of all influences, sickness."

"I'd ride over to-morrow or next day, if I thought I should find you, but you're so uncertain, and I really want"—he lowered his voice unconsciously—"to hear any thing more you may happen to know about that story you mentioned to-day."

"I don't think I have any thing to add," said the vicar.

"Well, I ain't going to ask you to-night, but you'll look in when you can, won't you?"

The vicar promised, and they shook hands and parted.

"The most officious fellow in England! Well-intentioned, no doubt; but he's always making me uncomfortable, and I suppose other people also. I wish Roke would present him to Scarbrook. I wish he could keep his scandals to himself. I don't think he'd come all that way to tell me any thing pleasant—delight some fellows take in tormenting their neighbors!"

Thinking of many things, he sauntered back toward the house, and was surprised to find himself so soon again on the steps.

The little game of piquet in his dressing-room amused Sir Roke, and soothed his nerves for bed.

"Well, what do you think of Temple?" inquired Mark, he shuffled the cards.

A hard shrewd glance Roke shot at him, but Mark's countenance had nothing alarming in it, and his eyes were upon the cards.

"Oh! Temple's very well, if he wasn't always talking shop, you know. He's very well, but too much shop," replied Sir Roke, cutting the cards. "He used to be clever—sang very

nicely, didn't he? And he wrote verses, I think, and was an accomplished fellow before he grew so dismal. Every thing good in its place; let him preach in his pulpit, I've no objection, but I do object to—I lead, don't I?—I object to sermons, and d—d disagreeable sermons after dinner."

And with this remark Sir Roke entered on his game; they played as usual; the baronet lost, and, when he had played enough, he thanked Mark, paid his losses, and yawned gently behind his hand.

"Very good of you, Mark, to get my nerves into tone, and enable me to sleep, by this little game. You'll come to-morrow night? I'm afraid it must be my last—what the devil's *that?*"

Some one had pushed open Sir Roke's door a little bit, and closed it again quickly.

It was near one o'clock by this time.

"Some one at the door," said Mark, getting up and opening it.

"No one there," said Mark; and he listened. "No, it was a mistake."

"No mistake," said Sir Roke, testily.

"I mean that some one mistook the door, and got away again on finding out his mistake," replied Mark Shadwell; "who on earth could it have been, though?" He bethought him, and again he looked out and listened. "Whoever it was, all's quiet now!" and he closed the door on the gallery, bid Roke "good-night," and went out the other way.

Sir Roke Wycherly was not in a pleasant mood that night, as Mr. Clewson was made aware. It was a phase of exasperation that tried that gentleman's politeness severely, a sort of dumb madness as to all utterances but revilings and curses—in which he indicated his orders by signs, and resented a misapprehension in such terms as would make a good curate's hair stand on end, and suggested the prudence of some such fumigation as that potent one we read of in the Book of Tobit.

These tempers excited Mr. Clewson's curiosity, for they were seldom wholly capricious when they reached that pitch of intensity; but depended for the most part on some exterior cause.

He wrote a letter at last. A curious observer of the human countenance would have noted an unpleasant flickering; the ironical lights and dismal shadows of an angry and malicious face, as he penned it, and read it over. It ended, however, by his putting it into the fire. It did not satisfy him, and looking wofully tired, he at length got himself into his bed, toned and tranquilized by his tinctures or drops; and looking like the corpse of a man arrested by death in the moment of revenge, he lay worn-out and bleak on his pillow.

This letter may have been to the Reverend Stour Temple, or to quite another person. I don't know. It will never be known till all secrets, great and little, are proclaimed.

It was three o'clock and the house quite still, when on a sudden Sir Roke was wakened, he fancied, by a noise. His nerves were jarred upon, and his heart thumping at his ribs as he wakened, as will happen with irritable men under the imperfect action of laudanum. He had just collected his wits, and remembered where he was, when he heard the handle of his door tried again from the outside.

Up jumped Sir Roke with the nimbleness of anger, resolved to clear this matter up; stealthily he got into his dressing-gown, lighted his bedroom candle, and drew near the door, and exactly as he again heard the handle of it cautiously turned from without, he turned the key in it, and candlestick in hand, with his head a little stooped, and features peaked and corrugated with anger, he confronted Carmel Sherlock, who stood before him, very pale and haggard, in his ordinary careless costume.

Like a somnambulist wakened, he recoiled in a kind of horror a pace or two, and then stood with his great dark eyes gleaming back the light of Sir Roke's candle upon the baronet.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MORITURUS.

NEITHER spoke for a while. At length, raising his candle a little, so as to disclose those odd confronting portraits more sharply, Sir Roke said, with a pallid grimace which sarcastically travestied a smile—

"I've been obliged to you, sir, I think, more than once for this kind of attention?"

"Very likely, very *certainly*," said Sherlock, just above his breath. "It must be that you lock your door."

"Pray, sir, do you *want* any thing in my room?" repeated Sir Roke, in the same constrained tone, and with the same angry smirk.

"No, sir, no. I've no business, certainly. It's a happy thing, sir, you wakened me," said Sherlock, looking full at him as before, and with a sort of shudder he went back another step.

"Then you've been walking in your *sleep*, sir, I suppose?" said Sir Roke, intent on mentioning the case to his host, with whom he felt very angry for having such a person in his house.

"Walking in my sleep, sir? Oh, no! that's double life; no, never, sir. Lock your door. I hope you will—*do*, sir—double lock and bolt."

"Your advice, sir, is immensely obliging," said the baronet, with the same sneer, but somehow fascinated by the sublime impudence and unintelligibility of his visitor, and unable to break away at the moment.

"No, don't fail, every man changes his theories from time to time, and looking among the ancients, I think the Sadducees were wrong, and there is some place like hell—"

"And I should say a likely way to settle one's mind upon that interesting question would be going about to people's bedrooms at this hour of night, and getting yourself mistaken for a burglar. Pray, sir, don't come *here* any more. Good-night." And so saying, with a burst of anger at himself for having played the fool for so long, he shut the door in Carmel's face, and locked it; and he cursed his audacious disturber with intensity, and rang up Clewson; and blew him up, not reasonably, for allowing every d—d fellow that had nothing better to do to hammer upon his door for half the night, and ruin his health; and he demanded of Mr. Clewson what the devil he was good for, and whether he fancied he would go on keeping him for nothing, and so forth.

So in his wrath he marched and counter-

marched Mr. Clewson, put him on fatigue duty, made him get on his clothes, and mount guard in the gallery outside his door. He made him share the bitterness of his own involuntary vigil, and strained his patience very nearly to the cracking point, and did not permit him to revisit his bed until sleep began to approach his own, and he wished him out of his way.

Sir Roke was one of those gentlemen who utterly pooh-pooh the idea of hell. He cultivated vague ideas of his Creator's beneficence, which had been unconsciously his epicurean comfort in many an incipient qualm about futurity.

"Hell, indeed! vastly good of him to call me out of my quiet sleep to tell me his ideas on that agreeable chimera; d—n the mad brute!"

Many fat good-humored fellows smile at hell, if they do not sneer. And many bad men class it with Styx and Tartarus—a bugbear and a fable.

Eating, drinking, dozing, comfortable friend! Willing to take a luxurious view of your Creator, and to make the day of judgment a good-natured sham. God is good, you say; it can not fare so ill with us. He is the God of love and of mercy, and of every good and pleasant thing. Alas! most certainly He is also the God of every evil thing—the God of pain, of madness, and of death. Look around on the gloom of this transitory world. If here and there is a broken beam of heaven, are there no glimmerings and shadows of hell? Are there not the hospitals, the mad-houses, the prisons, the grave-yards?

Is there no such word as incorrigible? Are there not criminals whom no punishment and no fear can cause to cease from troubling, whom nothing but final loss of liberty, or of life, the completest loss of liberty, can render harmless? Persons who have educated themselves into a systematic and irrevocable enmity to their race, to fair play, to God—persons to whom we award imprisonment for life, and leave them, at the end of it, morally where we found them—not to be trusted with liberty? There we leave them, and there we should find them, if life lasted twice or twenty times as long, or through eternity. We see this in our own economy, and can we not understand the possible necessity of "spirits in prison" forever, by the committal of God? If a perverted man be here so immutable, and will, with his limited powers and opportunities, inflict so much upon his fellows, how would it be with the opportunities of an everlasting life, and the magnified faculties of a being raised in power?

But Sir Roke Wycherly felt himself better and stronger every day. Though still an invalid, therefore, there was no reason he should think of another world yet, or trouble himself with any unearthly speculations. Very much of the earth, earthy indeed were his thoughts just now. A young lady, he thought, was fooling him. With a preposterous ambition playing fast and loose with him, he had grown more eager and incensed than perhaps he ever had been before in a similar pursuit. And worthy of admiration is it in such enterprises with what a devilish perseverance and energy obstacles will inspire the most supine and despicable of men.

Over the evil and the good, the hale and the sick, the jocund and the sad, the morning rose, and the slanting beams of sunrise blushed and glittered across the valley. The songs of happy birds greeted the dawn; rural laborers awoke, and the pleasant sounds of life were heard all around. A new page was opened in the Book of Life, on which all sorts and conditions of men were to write their unerasable inscriptions—their falsehood or truth—their virtue or wickedness, to be folded back in its turn, and see the light no more until the seal shall be broken, and the page shine in the glare of doomsday!

"What sort of person is that Mr. Sherlock who sometimes comes in to breakfast?" inquired Sir Roke, after that meal, of Rachel Shadwell, with whom he was now chatting by the window. "an odd being he seems to be."

"Oh! so odd, so simple and clever, and so really kind, and gentle, and affectionate," she answered, forgetting her reserve, in a kind of enthusiasm; "poor old Carmel! he taught me—let me think—ever so much. He taught me writing, and arithmetic, and French, and Italian, and some German, and some music too; I'm very fond of good old Carmel Sherlock."

Sir Roke listened politely, and then with a shrug and a smile answered—

"An Admirable Crichton! but he keeps very late hours, and visits people's apartments very oddly."

Rachel stared, and Sir Roke laughed gently.

"Yes, I assure you, he made me a call last night, and knocked me up, between three and four, to advise me to keep my door locked, and to instruct me in some of his admirable theology. I don't know that I shall adopt his theology, but his advice about locking my door I certainly shall."

"Yes, he is very odd," she answered, joining slightly in Sir Roke's laugh. "But he's very grateful."

"Odder still!" remarked the baronet.

"Papa has been very kind to him, and he is so devoted; I really think he would die for him."

"Oh! He *must* be very much obliged, indeed, and very romantic also, because dying for a friend is a sort of politeness one can't repeat. Life is a bird in the hand, which, if you let it fly, never returns. How charming the sun is to-day; how brilliant your flowers look!"

He pushed open the glass door which opened on the gravel walk, and paused. It was, however, so very genial a day that he was prepared to venture without his hat. He looked up, and waved his hand a little in the air, to be quite assured of its temperature.

"It is—yes—a charming day."

And he invited her to redeem her promise, and tell him the names of half a dozen flowers which he particularly affected, and forth went Rachel, "herself the fairest flower;" and her father, looking through the window, observed with a reserved satisfaction the little scene, and fancied a tenderness in Roke's manner, as he took the flowers from Rachel's fingers, and a sentiment in his smirk that pleased him infinitely.

Why was Mark Shadwell's head so full of the little comedy for whose opening scene he had rung the bell, and which he watched with an interest which perhaps no one but its cynical hero quite detected? He had never cared for

Rachel; he had grown indolent and unsociable in his rural solitude, and he had no very active desire to return to the glare and excitement of his early life. But this great marriage would be a mortification to many on whom it would delight the proud and wounded recluse to retaliate the contempt with which he fancied they had treated him.

Rachel, besides, cost him money, which his discontent exaggerated; and she was, somehow, in his way. As for Miss Marlyn, she, he was sure, would not like to leave Raby—no, she should not go. Amy would require a companion, and Miss Marlyn would remain their guest. Poor Amy! their marriage had been a great mistake—such were his conceited ruminations. A woman of mind and ambition would have been a wife to comprehend, and to promote the fortunes of such a man.

Sometimes Mark Shadwell's monstrous ambitions were re-lighted for an hour. He was, in his dreams, an M. P., high in office, the most brilliant reputation in England. His evening receptions crowded by personages and celebrities of all sorts, and certain personages peremptorily *excluded*—yes, that was a pleasant thought—sweetest drop in his mantling cup of nectar. These gorgeous dreams, however, it is but justice to say, were only occasional.

There were others worse, perhaps, but less fantastic, in which the scene was laid after the death of poor Amy—an event oftener in his mind than that pretty, fading, adoring little wife could have believed possible. That occurrence would be to him a liberation, and with it he connected a romance.

Miss Agnes Marlyn! Who so fit to be the wife of a man so gifted and aspiring as he? Clever, beautiful, energetic, how she would help to push his fortunes—how popular she would make him! What a little diplomatist she would be. How graceful, how elegant, how beautiful! Who could do the honors of his house when fortune should begin to shine, when he should sit for that borough which Roke had promised, so charmingly as she?

But these visions of active ambition, as I have said, depended on certain moods, and states of spirits, which were not always, nor indeed very often, his. And in his normal condition she was simply his future wife. Agnes Marlyn! without a guinea! Oh Prudence! What a thought for a man not far from half a century old. Time was when proud, handsome, highly descended Mark Shadwell would not have admitted such a dream. But solitude makes us less worldly, and more self-indulgent.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

LETTERS ON THE HEARTH-STONE.

Mark Shadwell was away that day among his woods and rabbits. During luncheon they heard the distant pop of his gun. His other shooting, thanks to the poachers, for Mark had long ceased to pay keepers, would not repay a trial. But his rabbits increased and multiplied; they swarmed in the burrowed woodlands, whose shades and solitudes accorded well with the indolent and dreamy habit of his discontented mind.

When he got among the knotted roots, the steeps and shadows of these sylvan uplands, he generally loitered away the whole day there. But on this occasion Mark had miscalculated his ammunition, and was out of powder early enough to make it worth his while to go back and replenish his powder-flask. Things were brightening for Mark, and his head full of pleasant chimeras. Had it been otherwise he would probably have loitered among the woods, powderless and morose, for the remainder of the day, with no occupation but his cigar.

Up stairs, in one of a suite of unfurnished rooms, Mark Shadwell kept his guns, fishing-rods, shot, and powder, and thither he went. Three rooms open *en suite*, and, contrary to his custom, and without any particular reason, he entered the first.

Standing near the window, with a shock, he saw Agnes Marlyn and Sir Roke Wycherly. The baronet was speaking in a low tone as he entered, and instantly was silent. If Mark had shot him with a pistol, he could not have eyed him for a moment with a stranger stare and gape. In another second the young lady had vanished through the distant door. Mark stood stock-still in the door-way, gaitened, in his rusty velveteen coat and wide-awake hat, with his old-fashioned shot-belt across his breast, looking very pallid and foolish.

Miss Marlyn was gone, indeed, in a moment. But her face, with its strange look of *guilt*—was it?—was caught and fixed in his brain.

If they had been allowed even one moment's preparation, I dare say the beautiful Miss Agnes Marlyn and the withered Sir Roke would have met Mark with countenances so serene, and an air so plausible, that he would have been puzzled, and prepared to accept, or at least entertain, any explanation they might have chosen to offer. But Mark Shadwell, whom they had reason to believe to be more than a mile away at that moment, was standing, even before they saw him, in the door-way, and gazing at them with a countenance in which they both saw consternation and menace.

Sir Roke—a man of the world, inured to such small reverses, disciplined in dissimulation, and blessed with presence of mind—was quite himself before Mark had half recovered his shock.

"I thought I heard your voice, and I wasn't wrong—just this moment, coming out of my room—and I fancied it came from here," said Sir Roke, gayly, with his withered, impenetrable smile; "and as I entered at one door, Miss—Miss—what's her name? came in at the other. Ha, ha, ha! I'm always in luck; I fancied she mistook *me* for *you*, and came in for instructions—your secretary, isn't she? A very good idea; very agreeable; I quite envy you. She made so many apologies, and looked ready to sink into the earth—ha, ha, ha! I think she said she writes your letters."

"Yes, my letters—that is, sometimes. You both thought, of course, that I was still away, shooting in the woods," said Mark, fixing his eyes, with a strange look, upon Roke, and speaking in a measured way.

"I really had not been making conjecture-

on the subject—I can't say, of course, how the young lady had been employed; for my part, I fancied, as I crossed the gallery, that I heard your voice *here*, and, the door being open, I walked in. I hope I have not done very wrong. I was making my excuses to the young lady when you came in; I must have heard your voice as you came up the stairs."

"No, that couldn't be; I did not speak—some mistake," said Shadwell. "I've come in to get some powder. Should you like to take a gun for once, and try the rabbits?"

"No, thanks; I was just going out for a walk. Have you any notion where I should find my Cousin Rachel?"

"Not the slightest," said Mark, shortly.

"Well, I must only try. Pretty landscape that;" and Sir Roke, as he spoke, waved his hand toward the window, and smiled from the distance through it in such a way as ought to have made the flowers turn their innocent bells and cups toward him, and the birds sing more sweetly.

Thus smiling—with a little nod—Sir Roke was gone, leaving Mark Shadwell standing there, with his empty powder-flask rather tightly held in his hand.

Mark's look was cast down on the floor, and there was a very angry tumult of suspicion, and other dark passions, at his heart. He entered the other room, where his powder and shot and fishing-tackle lay locked up in a press. It was simply the impetus of his first intention that carried him on, for powder and rabbits were now quite out of his mind.

On the middle of the floor of this room he stood with downcast eyes, and darkened face, I can not say thinking, but rather stunned, and with the elements of fury indistinctly rolling in his breast.

He walked to the dim windows, stained with the old patterings of rain, and looked out, without an object. A pleasant female laugh sounded from beneath, and he saw Miss Agnes Marlyn talking with Rachel, on the grass. She seemed gay and at her ease, and the sights, suffering as he was, stung his pride with a momentary agony.

As he entered the room just now, and surprised her and Sir Roke in conference, a truth, though undefined, quite incompatible with accident or honesty, shocked him in their faces, transitory as one intense flash of lightning, but fastened, with an unerasable chemistry, forever in his brain. All Sir Roke's rubbishy explanations—lies, lies, *lies!* How near he had been to tell him, at one moment, that he *lied!* He was glad now that he had not. To betray his rage would have been a humiliation. Was it possible, after all, that there was some truth in Roke's explanation? No, it *could* not be. That one look that met him was detection.

With a sudden resolution he turned and walked swiftly across the room, along the silent gallery, and direct to Miss Agnes Marlyn's room.

That room was simple, neat, nothing out of its place. Not a letter was lying about. He espied that little desk, inlaid with circles and fleur-de-lis of brass, quaint and rather pretty. He tried it, and found it locked. He tried his own keys, but they would not do. Mark Shadwell! Was it possible? in his governess's room, a shabby spy and detective!

There was only this extenuation: he would have done precisely the same had her eyes been upon him. No; he was no spy, but the grand inquisitor, in his power and fury. He was not to be baffled by that artful little lock; his anger found a rough and ready way, and he carried the reserved and pretty little desk to the hearth, and with force, measured by his fury rather than its strength, dashed it upon the stone.

Delicate and obstinate little lock, decorative brass clasps, neat dovetailing, and glue, all burst into wreck in a moment, and away flew, with a tiny clatter, broken bits of sealing-wax, a pencil-case, a seal, and two or three keys, over the floor; the letters lay among the wreck, and them he gathered up into a little pack, and laid them, methodically enough, on the small table near the window. There were not a dozen in all. There was the wife's gentle letter, which did not seem to hire but to invite, Miss Agnes Marlyn—the beginning of all this!

The rest were in French; a few of two years since—adoring, fierce, sublime—from the constructor of the desk whose wreck lay on the hearth-stone, violated. There were three in English, and they were from Sir Roke—the envelopes addressed in another, or a disguised, hand. The sneak! Mark gasped, and ground his teeth, unable to find a term of execration bitter enough for the man and the occasion. I don't know that Sir Roke would have thought *his* procedure deserving of a much better one.

He read them carefully. Their meaning reached his angry brain but slowly, so many images excited and interrupted him. One of these letters, he thought, said, without seeming to say, that Sir Roke could not marry. Good heavens! The sublime audacity of that little gipsy adventuress.

Had it not been for Mark Shadwell's own dreams about the baronet, would he have regarded Miss Marlyn's castle in the air with a contempt so exasperated and virulent? He actually laughed, with a kind of rage, over the idea.

He could not quite make out their relations by means of these three letters, two of which were very short. Sir Roke called her "provoking," "cruel," "unintelligible." He talked of "encouragement" and "unreasonableness." He said he had hoped that he had made "his difficulties and his hopes better understood." He said in another place, that he "honored her motives"—hypocritical villain!—and that he knew, "so soon as she arranged that interview which she had promised," he could "entirely satisfy, not only her honorable scruples, but her *conscience*." That he meant "altogether honorably, and she *knew* it."

On the whole, thus much was clear: whatever the origin of their intimacy might be, that Sir Roke had come to Raby with no other object than to see Agnes Marlyn; that, as appeared from the tenor and date of one of his letters, she had evidently consulted him as to whether she should come to Raby. He fancied, from some faint allusion, too, that she had been describing him—Mark Shadwell—amusingly! What he would have given for a copy of the entire correspondence! It was enough, however. She should leave Raby peremptorily, and he would tell Roke, in plain terms, what he thought of him.

Thus resolved this proud, reserved, conceited man. His heart was wrung with a terrible mortification.

CHAPTER XXXV.

ALONE, YET NOT ALONE.

When Mark Shadwell first picked up Sir Roke's letters, he was trembling with eagerness for a collision with the shabby author of them. He could hardly wait patiently to read them through. But his pride helped him now. He had been spelling over these letters for more than ten minutes, and by the time he had mastered their contents, he was cool enough to act more in accordance with his haughty character.

The letters were now in his hand. But he had changed his mind. It would be time enough to talk to Roke by and by. It would not do to make a fracas about a little governess. It would be *agony* to betray that other disappointment. To no one—even to his wife, hardly to himself—would he endure to define that fraudulent insult. If, indeed, Roke had meant it—for there might have been something of chance; but no, it was a premeditated deception, and intended to mask his real object—what name could adequately describe such a man?

Mark had the letters in his hand; but he knew all they contained, and there was no need to satisfy any one but himself upon the matter. He looked down on the coy, little, murdered desk, dislocated, gaping on the hearth-stone, bleeding ink from its broken bottle; and his impulse was to tear the vile letters across, and fling them upon it. But that would have been but accumulating evidence of his irritation; and, instead, he placed them on the other letters that stood like a pack of cards, ready to be shuffled or cut, on the table.

Down stairs went Mark again. A quarter of an hour had done a great deal for him. Powder, shooting, gun, he forgot. From habit, he took his stick in the hall, and sallied forth, with quick strides, to stun the sense of pain with exercise. The sun was gone from his sky, and the future an awful chasm.

Away to the sylvan solitudes he had lately left, he strode. Along their slopes and sides, under the congenial darkness of the branches, he walked, and sat down at last, at the entrance of a glade, upon the trunk of a prostrate tree. The summits of the wood were touched by the level beams of the declining sun, which here and there broke redly through the hoary stems of the forest.

"To think of that d—d old satyr—old in health, in strength, and in brain—whatever he may be in years—coming down here upon such an errand! He always hated me, I think; and I'm sure I always hated him—with *reason*. He never had a kind thought in all his days, or a sympathy, or a human feeling; his heart—a cold lump of stone—*always* the same. A boy—*what* a d—d boy he was! I'm glad I gave him that licking at Scarbrook. I gave him one good licking—ha, ha!—thank God! I wish old Weals had not come between us; I think I'd have killed him then. It *was* a good one. *Every* one was glad. I hope to God he remembers *every blow*. The devil, they say, haunts Wynderfel. *Does* he? If there be one, I shouldn't wonder. I wish he'd pay Raby a visit, and take away what belongs to him."

He glanced through the distant opening in the wood, down which was visible a glimpse of the grey walls of Wynderfel, a grass-tufted chimney, and a mullioned window, through which the sky of sunset dimly glowed.

The rustle of withered leaves in the fitful air, and the evening song of the birds accompanied incongruously the long and bitter denunciation with which Mark Shadwell amused or scared the wandering spirits of the wood.

"And that girl—the idea!—can she possibly fancy that Roke Wycherly could seriously think of marrying her? Roke Wycherly marry her! Is the minx mad? Roke Wycherly, the hardest screw in England, sacrifice himself to the ambition of a little adventuress!"

This unjust man, cruel to some, almost loving to others at times, on the great voyage, every knot of which is irrevocable, without helm or compass, in which a mistake is worse than running on the shore of the Cyclops, had no misgivings about his missing chart and empty binnacle, but drove on in the dark, before wind and sea, with the confidence of madness.

I have thought of Mark Shadwell as of one altogether worthless, because his name calls up always a rueful image of an adoring little wife—faded, neglected, despised. Perhaps, in some measure, I have wronged him, and condemned him too sweepingly. There remained a residuum of compassion; at moments the remembrance of his early feelings returned, and sometimes a qualm of compunction visited him. His daughter Rachel, I believe, he loved, although he usually spoke to her but little; and a stranger would have fancied, from his looks and taciturnity, that she was in perpetual disgrace. His sullen demeanor was, however, but the expression of his pain—of a profound and angry ulcer. Had he been in reality the character which he affected—a philosopher—and cheerfully made up his mind to seize the opportunities of happiness that lay neglected about his path, he might easily have been, not only a merrier, but a better man.

Sometimes, considering the sort of education he received, and how inflexibly species are formed by circumstances, I almost wonder that he was not a worse man than we find him. The more I marvel at his delusions, the more I admire his moderation. Considering how preposterous was his estimate of his powers, I am amazed at the modesty of his demeanor. Considering how much ruin he fancied his marriage had involved him in, I wonder, selfish as he was, at his toleration of his wife. Much that was odious there was in him, but vestiges and rudiments also of good.

If it had not been for his angry pride, always on the watch, and ingenious in imagining insult, he might have lived on terms with his neighbors. As it was, he had surrounded himself with quarrels and antipathies, and lived in a haughty isolation in which he yearly grew more morbid and embittered.

The sun by this time had gone down behind the crest of the distant wood, and Mark Shadwell, who had meditated a long and solitary ramble, and had not meant to see Roke Wycherly, or, if he could, any other human face again

that night, sat rapt in his gloomy visions; in Swift's phrase, "rolling resentments and framing revenges."

The crows had glided from the glowing west, across the yellow and sea-green sky of evening, home to their leafy roostings in the forest of Wynderfel, from whence their cawings sounded now faintly like the roar of a distant sea.

Mark Shadwell sat looking on the sod between his feet with a pale stare—fixed, as it were, in a wicked dream. You would have said he was looking into an unseen grave, upon the face of the man whom he hated. When he looked up, upon the saddened sky of evening, his thoughts for a while were toned with a corresponding melancholy, and then on a sudden came a ghastly despair.

"Why did that d—d girl's image take possession of me? Yes, she has—she has; while I was cheating myself with dreams of superiority and indifference, I was becoming the slave of a creature whom I understand and despise, *and hate*, and yet whom I love. My God! it is true; I could shoot her dead at my feet this moment, and then myself. To think of that d—d, sneaking, sickly, smirking villain! A plan—a scheme—in league both to use and cheat me. Away she goes! How she'll stare when I bid her begone! I'll do it coldly too—give her no reason."

Up he got, and paced down the slope of the wood in the direction of Wynderfel, and found himself at last, in the twilight, by the ruined chapel of the old manor house, among the half-obliterated graves and tombstones.

How beautiful the silvery glimmer of the moon shows in the grey twilight sky! How thin and airy looked the tall walls and gables of old Wynderfel in that deceptive light! Through the old grave-yard Mark Shadwell sauntered, dark as an evil spirit, and entered the silent court-yard of the ruined manor, and looked about him in a dream.

Of the different forms of temptations, those ascribed distinctively to the world, the flesh, and the devil—the latter, which deal with the malignities of human nature, are awfully exaggerated by solitude. In many ways, it is not good that man should be alone. Human society is perhaps the ordained prophylactic against the horrors and cajoleries of that unseen society that broods and pines in desert places. Undisturbed in solitude, the corrosive action of these murderous passions bites deep. The terrible spirits who lust for possession, there waylay and overpower their prey; any companionship is better than that. Better that the mind should be ruffled and rippled by the breezes, and even lashed by the storms of life, than lie dead and smooth to reflect the starless sky.

As the twilight deepened, the angry thoughts in Mark's mind grew more vivid; so that at last he was almost scared at their intensity.

"Ten years ago I should have done it, had he so insulted me, but no one fights now; let that thought away then—let it away. I like it too well—*do* I? He's not worth it; let it go, or let it *come*, if it will."

And with this invitation a figure appeared through the opposite archway, so opportunely, as to make him start. It paused, and Carmel Sherlock spoke—

"Mr. Shadwell! Here, sir? and I thinking of you."

"I ought to have known you," answered Shadwell, gruffly; "you're always in out-of-the-way places. I've been here but once before this year, and you met me from under that very door-way."

"When I come to Wynderfel, I always pass under that same archway, sir; I feel that I should violate fate if I entered Wynderfel by any other way but that. Some day or other I shall see something there, or hear something, or meet it *there*—good or ill—essential to my destiny."

"But, I say, what the devil brings you here?" interrupted Shadwell, savagely; "if you want *me*, I'm in no mood for nonsense, and can't talk *now*."

"Nor I, to-morrow," moaned Carmel.

"Well, *do* speak, and have done."

"I'm glad, sir; for I wanted to say a word."

"Out with it then, I say, and have done with it—or, keep it to yourself, another time will do," said Shadwell, turning away impatiently.

"Where the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together," said Carmel, following by his side.

"Yes, that's in the Bible," sneered Mark; "but I don't exactly see the application."

"There's a state of the brain, sir, in which bloody thoughts keep wheeling about it," said Carmel Sherlock.

"What the devil's that to us?" said Mark Shadwell, stopping short, with an angry turn.

"I did not say—I hope, *nothing*, sir, nothing; but eagles—vultures, rather. What a bird a vulture is! Prometheus chained—don't you see? and the vultures come; I can fancy him shake his head at them in his agony, and spit at them, and strive to fright them off with cries, but they keep circling lower and nearer—he's partly dead and partly in hell—did you never feel the death of hope and the hell of jealousy?"

Mark looked at him for a moment in the imperfect light. "Neither the one nor the other, thank you; had not you better get home, and eat your dinner?"

"I was going to say farewell," said Carmel.

"Farewell," said Shadwell.

"I shall leave Raby," said Carmel.

"Well, now, pray do just go and eat your dinner, and you'll be ever so much better; and we can talk about your going to-morrow morning. *No*," repeated Shadwell, silencing Carmel Sherlock's incipient speech, imperiously; "you shan't say another word on that subject till to-morrow morning; I say *no*, I *won't* hear it."

And so saying, Mark Shadwell turned from him suddenly, like a man resolved to shake off another, and strode away through the ruins.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

MISS MARLYN IN AN ODD MOOD.

"WHAT does that d—d fellow mean by his talk about jealousy, and all that stuff?" thought Shadwell, furiously. "What can he be thinking about? he's not a spy, nor a traitor, nor a *witch* neither; I venture to say he has not a notion what he means himself!" Still a suspicion was in his mind that Carmel had divined something of the

truth, and he was angry with him, angry with himself, and his wounded pride lay writhing under a sense of exposure.

Mark Shadwell had no care, in his present temper, for the decencies of hospitality, and had his solitary mood continued upon him, Sir Roke might have looked in vain at dinner for his host.

On a sudden, however, the image of Agnes Marlyn was before his imagination, and an impulse determined him irresistibly homeward. He would see her—in what mood, his passions and thoughts were too confused to resolve. So, skirting the now darkened forest, he walked sullenly toward the house of Raby.

About the same hour Miss Marlyn and Rachel were walking under the rows of grand old timber that flank the avenue, toward the house. Agnes has been laughing and talking in unusual spirits. It was not gayety, however; it was excitement.

"I wish, Agnes, you were always so merry."

"I wish I were," answered Agnes, with a sudden change. "Though just now my laughter sounds in my ears like an idiot's. Why should I laugh? life is simply terrible for me. What would have befallen the bird who found no rest for the sole of her foot, if there had remained no ark for her to return to? It is different for you—you have a home—but *I!* Come, we won't think."

"And *you* have a home, dear Agnes, while *I* have one; you know very well that we all like you, and I love you, although I don't know quite whether you like me."

"That's all romance, my dear little girl, and very pretty; but it's not true—don't start—I'm sure you *think* it's true, but it isn't. Sentiment and liking are all very fine, but they are subject to mutation, and are transitory. It's very nasty, I know, but quite true; there is nothing solid but *property*—ha, ha! and *I* have little more than my thimble; and life is a rough and a cold sea to cross, and I'm no witch, and I can't sail in a sieve—and—what do you advise me to do? Isn't it a pity there are no Protestant nunneries, where girls who must become old maids, and perhaps tenants of the work-house, as things are, might dedicate themselves to comfort and seclusion, without the mortification of public celibacy and penury?"

"I never know, Agnes, when you are jesting; but I am serious—I mean, indeed I do, every word I have said."

"So do I, Rachel dear, every word. I feel this evening—what shall I say?—*enterprising.* I think I should like masquerade in male attire, as other girls have done, and enlist—or go to sea. You read the other day an Irish story, about a man sitting on a stone that was sinking in the middle of a bog, and who gratefully accepted the offer of an eagle to fly him out of his dilemma. Now, my dear, this Raby is all very well. It's pretty, and pastoral, and romantic, and what not? I like staying here, but how is it to end? You will be marrying and running away; I shall be growing old, and finally, I shall be left alone to sink in the bog. Yes, this Raby is the stone, and I feel it already sinking under me, and I should be obliged, I think, to any fowl or monster, a pegasus or a goose, willing and strong enough, to fly me out of it."

"You certainly speak plainly, dear Agnes, though I think you might speak a little more kindly," said Rachel, who was hurt.

"Come, come, *ma chère*, we must take care of ourselves. There's nothing unkind in being honest. There's not a creature on earth who cares for me, and therefore I must the more particularly care for myself."

Miss Agnes laughed, Rachel thought, a little more bitterly than she need, as she said this.

"I told you that *I* like you, Agnes."

"But you *don't*, dear."

Rachel stared.

"No," laughed Agnes, "you *can't;* how can you like a person you don't know, and me you can't know. There are things about me I don't know myself, and what I *do* know, *you* don't. Come, be honest, Miss Rachel, don't we mystify one another all we can? do I know you quite? and how can you know me?"

"Well, *you* know best," said Rachel; "I suppose we are all hypocrites."

"More or less," said Agnes, quietly; "you talk of liking me! No one likes another, unless they love them through all their follies, tempers, and crimes. None of these have *I* shown. But how can we tell that your liking would stand that strain? Suppose I were to leave Raby to-night, and you, none of you, never hear more of me, would you still like me? Mr. Sherlock, you know, you mentioned is going, no one knows why or whither; I don't mean to elope with him, but I don't think that sort of flitting a bad idea."

"I hope he is not going; I don't believe he is, I am so fond of poor old Carmel Sherlock," said Rachel.

"Not so old," interposed Agnes, disagreeably.

"You are determined to laugh at every thing to-night," said Rachel, "but the place would not be like itself if he were gone, and I can't think he will go, he's so kind and affectionate.

"Not like me, who am odious enough to think sometimes of myself," said Miss Marlyn, in her odd bitter mood. "Well, if he goes, we have still a resource in that charming vicar," Miss Marlyn added, with an irony that was not playful.

"Mr. Temple, you mean?"

"The Reverend Sour or Stour Temple; yes, what an agreeable man—what a gentleman—how pretty!" and she laughed.

"Mamma likes him very much."

"He admired your mamma very much, I believe, once on a time."

"I dare say—every one did who saw her when she was young, and I think her quite beautiful still—but I don't see what that has to do with what I'm saying. Mamma thinks him a very good and useful clergyman, and so do I, and so does papa, although they sometimes disagree about things."

"And, oh! that funny old bald foozle, that fancies himself a lover," said Miss Marlyn, with a sudden recollection and a laugh.

"Who?" asked Rachel.

"*Bonnie*—who but our charming friend, Bonnie? She should have called him Bauldie, if it must be Scotch, after the young man in the 'Gentle Shepherd,' that stupid book, I'm so glad we have done it."

"Oh, Pucelle! you must not laugh at Roger Temple," pleaded Rachel.

"I *must* laugh at Roger Temple! at every thing! I should *die* in this place else, and why should not he be laughed at like the rest? Preposterous old fool!"

Somehow there was a desecration here in Rachel's mind. She was shocked, and a little disgusted; but, after all, Roger Temple was a difficult case to fight, for she could not conceal it from herself that he *was* preposterous.

"Take care," said she, "he's in love with you."

"*Well?*" said Miss Marlyn, with an odd smile, that showed the glittering edge of her even teeth.

"You may marry him yet."

"And suppose I do, does that make any difference? I shall love, honor, and laugh at him —*selon les règles*—still."

By this time they were crossing the hall, now nearly dark, and entered the room where they were accustomed to read together, and here the faint glow still reflected from the western clouds afforded them an imperfect and melancholy light, through the still open window.

"There is this comfort in having no one to care for you, that you have no one to control you. There is not a person on earth who has a right to command or even to question me, and so, child, I'm perfectly free and—perfectly *miserable*. It *will* cost me a pang, many a pang, to leave Raby, as leave it I soon shall, but fate, and pride, and despair, ordain it. I hate myself for going—I'm different from you, Rachel; you can't understand me, if you could *you* would hate me also. No, don't kiss me, it is folly, you shall never kiss me more. I suppose you think me mad; for the last four hours I have been walking and talking in a dream, and yet I am not mad, and it is all a reality, only I have taken a resolution that has nearly broken my heart—don't ask me, I'm talking because I *must* talk, but it is not confidence, and I'm no worse, not an atom, and no better, than *you*, than all others, who act according to their circumstances, and opportunities, and necessities, and I'll never talk of it to you more. A beautiful sunset it must have been! how it glows! There were sunsets like it two thousand years ago, and will be again two thousand years hence; and my story is an old one, and will turn up with a different heroine—generation after generation there is nothing new, and things are no better and no worse than they were, and than they will be always."

Agnes spoke wildly, though quietly; and Rachel was startled by her manner, which was resolute, and defiant, and excited. Curious as Rachel was, and even alarmed, she instinctively felt that, at least just then, it would have been vain to ask for an explanation. So, sitting at the window, looking out upon the dying flush that still glowed in the west, Rachel, without an attempt to stay her, saw Agnes Marlyn leave the room.

"She is angry, I think; what can have happened? *I* have said nothing to vex her. She'll tell me all by and by. She can't seriously mean all she says. Yes; she'll tell me the cause, I dare say, and she will be like herself again."

Rachel fancied she thought all this, but she did not, for the dark laugh of Agnes chilled her with a strange presage of evil.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

VENUS Δύσερως, FAREWELL.

The window was open; the rich odors of the flowers exhaled on the evening air, and the rose-tinted western lights, melting into the deep sky of the coming night, inspired that luxurious melancholy which is, for the young, the poetic foreshadowing of the sorrows of life. Rachel, leaning against the side of the window, looked out upon those fading piles of cloud that crowned the solemn landscape, and experienced the influence of the hour and the scene. From under the boughs of the ancient clump of trees that stands nearest to the house, emerged a figure, and slowly approached the window at which she sat.

"Only *I*, Miss Rachel; only I, your old tutor," said the well-known voice of Carmel Sherlock.

"Oh! Mr. Sherlock?" she said, kindly.

"It is a long time, Miss Rachel, since we read French, and German, and Italian."

"Yes, very long; but you have been so busy."

"A long interruption, Miss Rachel."

"Too long—a great deal," she said.

"All goes on and on, Miss Rachel; and that time sickened and died, and a new time has come; and that, too, will die, and be succeeded by another, and another; the first perishes, there is no unknitting the fruit, and expanding it into the flower again; there is no folding the flower, and shutting it up in the seed again. Nature makes no step back—never looks over the shoulder—never."

"Well, *shan't* we resume our Italian soon? we must begin again—soon—*very* soon," said she.

"No; not soon—*never*," he said, very sadly.

"Never! Why?" asked Rachel.

"You see, Miss Rachel, they all believe, one way or another, in that palin-genesis; for my part, I can't believe but that, somehow, I shall see the light again, and see my love again. Petrarch met, I think, his Laura when he died. How beautiful those lime-trees are, where I read 'Tasso,' long ago, to you, when you were a little thing. I love these solitudes, and when I die, I'll come—yes, I'll come again—not to be seen —only to wander here by the old limes, where I read 'Tasso,' long ago. Or at Wynderfel, where sympathy grows among the brambles and ivy-tendrils, and the wind among the high gables has a pitying sound, where I may chance to meet that poor lady who died for her love; and I would tell her—my God!—all my misery. The sordid idol!"

She listened to this rhapsody, as she had to others from the lips of the same strange prophet, not understanding, only in kindness. His lonely habits had taught him quite to dispense with dialogue, and his spoken meditation flowed on—

"That was her girlish thought—to die. Yes, once worshiped, always a divinity — *always*. Break the poor heart—*that* was the shrine. Shatter the brain, where the image always stands in light; it is so *only* that love can break the idol, and extinguish the tapers of a vain worship. I hear that scream—sometimes—so far away—at night! Yes, indeed, by Heaven I did! like one wild note of distant music—the past and future

in it. I've stood a whole night, at the window, listening. It hardly lasts while you could count ten throbs of your pulse—swelling on and on, louder and louder, till it stops in silence. That one note is a concert from Paradise and Tartarus; it fills a whole night, to a man who will think; the hours fly so swiftly after it, pursuing like seas to drown it. Nature hastens to hide it away; the morning comes before I am aware."

Carmel looked with a despairing eye over the wide landscape toward the disappearing glow of sunset, as you might fancy a shipwrecked man upon a lonely raft gazing toward the fading light in the space of ocean.

"What a pity! Love does not meet love in this world; follows a phantom and unreal voices, and, finding itself alone, dies. A hard case it is. Love crosses love, like ships at sea, each on a different errand, over the waste of life; the narrow horizon coming up and disappearing. Miss Rachel, it is terrible! the affections all so minute and intense, and nature and time so vast and vague—all love so individual; it may be never, in the revolution of time and the changes of worlds, *never* to meet again. You need not tell me; I tell myself. *I know* it; it is unreal. *I* have created it; but it is irrevocable—an irreparable mistake. I have found it out, but am none the better. Satan has come, and I have tasted of knowledge; and so—*forth* from Paradise forever. The wide world; the dark night! Little Miss Rachel, with the golden hair, how long it seems since I taught you to write! I don't blame you; I never did. It is *nature* that is cruel—kind, but also *cruel*. The bird will fly—nature is vigorous—the bird will fly! All pain, and pleasure, and illusion, come to an end. Instinct, the inspiration of our birth, alone inflexible. God whispered to each creature when he made it, and God is immutable."

Carmel looked down, and up, and stamped upon the ground.

"The hoary Satan!—the old dragon!—with poisonous tongue and golden scales, lying under this moon awhile, basking and panting in a gluttonous dream. The reptile!—the murderer! There is a spear of light for him. The sun shall be darkened, and the moon turned into blood. When he moves, the skin of the earth quivers. The elements that gave him birth abhor him. But my hand I hold palm upward. My robe is white. The megatherium, mastodon, mammoth, are extinct. Leave the monstrous generations to the vindicator, Death. Out of the castle I go, and close the gate after me; into the night, the forest, the waste—never to look back—only hoping for some spot where a worn-out man may die! The journey—the descent; and oh! at last, the fountain of forgetfulness, and the sleep of death. I hope, Miss Rachel, I have not been ungrateful—that is, quite unprofitable."

"Unprofitable! no one was ever kinder or more useful," she answered.

"That is all," he said, sadly.

"And if you were to leave us, I really don't know how papa could manage without you; and as for me, almost every thing I know I have learned from you, my kind teacher."

"Ah! yes, the Italian—the French; these will go on, and she will remember, and sometimes say, I learned these from that poor Carmel Sherlock, who went away, and was heard of no more."

"No; I will say I learned them from that kind Mr. Sherlock who would *not* go away, because he knew it would make us all sorry; who stayed with us, and is with us still, and will never leave Raby."

Sherlock with both hands leaned on the window-stone, as a drowning man might cling to a rock, and she thought he looked steadfastly in her face. She could not see his features distinctly in the deep shadow, but it seemed to her that he was weeping.

Her heart bled with compassion for the kind creature who had been so gentle with her through all the inattention and waywardness of her childish years, and she wondered how one who never gave a moment's pain to others should inflict so much, and, as it seemed to her, so causelessly, upon himself.

"I'm going, Miss Rachel; I've come to say farewell. I'll leave Raby perhaps to-night; perhaps in the morning; but I'll see you no more."

"Really!" exclaimed she, in a kind of consternation.

"Really, miss—if there should be such a word as real where all is a dream. So, Miss Rachel, good-bye."

"No, I'll *not* say good-bye," said she; "and you shan't go—good, kind Carmel. I don't think I should know Raby without you; so, good-bye it shall not be."

"Well, miss, what will you say?"

"I'll say good-night, as usual."

"Very well, miss," and he held out his hand timidily. She gave him hers. "It will do; yes, better. Good-night, Miss Rachel; for *night* it will be."

He hurriedly kissed her hand, and repeated faintly, "Good-night!" and he walked quickl away along that front of the old house, and was lost to her sight, before she had quite recovered from the surprise of the strange familiarity, if any thing so sad and timid could be so called, of his parting salutation.

"Poor Carmel! is he really going? And so grieved; he seems quite heart-broken. Has he heard any very bad news from his people at home? Surely he ought to tell us; papa might be of use, and advise him; and he ought to know that we all feel for him, and with him, in all his troubles."

So she murmured to herself, as, leaning from the window, she looked after the disappearing figure of Carmel Sherlock.

He walked round the two sides of the house, and by the small projecting tower, I may call it, in which his quaint apartment lay.

"What an oddity—poor old Carmel!" said she, with a little shrug and a smile, as he disappeared.

"Spirit of light and beauty!" said he, with a moan. "Henceforward for me, the long, dark winter of the north! The hour of flowers and of light I shall see no more."

Up and around he looked; he was taking leave of every thing that night.

The front of the house, with the hall-door, and the winged demi-griffins keeping guard, with fierce crooked beaks, and talons, and expanded wings, were all in deep shadow by this time. He stood upon the steps—the door partly opened.

"What is the meaning of these things?" pondered Carmel Shelrock, whose mind, like all

others too strongly infused with fancy, was easily and powerfully diverted by any object that invited for the moment his imagination. "These griffins, which heraldry has found—not created; the eagle, the lion—a combination whose origin goes back into mystery: an Assyrian image, proceeding, perhaps, from visions. What is its meaning—what is its force? What latent power and action on this world of spirits? See *here!* this great family of Shadwell—the Shadwells of Wynderfel; all through the County History growing greater and greater till they came here, and passed in and out between these carved dreams. Not a breath — not a sound—enters the door but through them; and how have they dwindled ever since! wane and waste!—peak and pine! Ha! what's *that?*"

"Well! *what* is it?" said Shadwell, surlily, who had nearly reached the door-steps unperceived, on his return. "Perhaps it's I; will you allow me to get by?"

"I *saw* it, sir!"

"What did you see?" demanded Mark.

"I swear I saw it pass and enter the house!"

"Suppose we follow it," said Mark. "I think it did right at this hour."

"Only a shadow—a degree darker than the rest; your evil genius or mine; an influence, about no good—

"——Things that love night,
Love not such nights as these."

"Do, pray, allow me to go in, or go yourself," said Mark Shadwell, looking much angrier than his words implied.

Carmel Sherlock drew back.

"One meets you everywhere, except where you are wanted. Don't you think you might sometimes look into the books up stairs; the accounts will be in a precious mess, if you do nothing but study the picturesque and see ghosts!" and so speaking, with an angry look at Carmel Sherlock—a look changed with violent and unspoken wrath—he entered the house.

"See, how angry he is: he can't help it. He does not see the cause: he only feels it—my benefactor!"

Carmel Sherlock hesitated at the threshold, and with a shudder entered, it and went up alone to his room.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

AGNES IN HER BEDROOM.

Miss Marlyn took a candle and went upstairs to her room. In the hall she passed the open door of the drawing-room, and from within, a gaunt figure beckoned her silently, with a smile; affecting not to see Sir Roke, she passed on, but he overtook her at the foot of the staircase.

"You did not *see* me?" said he, with the same smile, and in a very low tone.

She stopped short, and looked full on him with rather fierce eyes, and flushed cheeks, and said: "Yes, sir, I did."

"You *did?* Then you *cut* me! Cruel isn't it?"

As he spoke, the baronet glanced back into the hall and up the stairs vigilantly.

"You said, sir—you *promised*, upon your *honor*, that you would speak to me no more, during your stay at Raby. I don't much care—but if you will speak—speak aloud."

"I should not have spoken at all, had you deigned to smile as you passed," he said gallantly, and glanced again quickly, but no one approached; "why did not you come in for a moment to the drawing-room—I don't frighten you, I hope."

"You can have nothing to say, sir, you *know* you can't; do leave me at peace while you stay here; let me collect my thoughts, if I can."

"Well, you are a *very* odd—"

"Very odd, perhaps," she said, turning away to pass on.

"Yes, a most capricious and charming little witch," said he.

"Very commonplace, perhaps. When I've made up my mind, though I may suffer, I debate no more. If that is odd, it should not be so," she continued, taking no note of his parenthesis.

At this moment a distant step was heard, and Agnes went her way, and Sir Roke glided quietly again into the drawing-room, where standing on the hearth-rug, he looked up at the reflected flicker of the fire, on the distant cornices, with an unpleasant smile.

At times, indeed, this evidence of satisfaction was heightened to a quiet laugh; he had not been in such spirits since his arrival at Raby. He was disposed to be charmed with every thing. It was a little excursion into savage life, and he liked the notion of roughing it, as in this case, without any essential sacrifice of comfort. He smiled, he laughed, it was no habitual homage to the genialities; but in his solitude, the expansion of a genuine comfort and elation. He even spoke peaceably that evening to Mr. Clewson.

He looked at his watch—still a quarter of an hour to wait. He rather enjoyed his dinner at Raby—country fare, and no French cookery, very odd, but a new sensation, and he was hungry, as invalids are oftener than they will always allow.

He thought he heard Mark Shadwell's step crossing the passage outside the door; he placed himself so as to see. It was Mark, returning from his walk. The guest was but dimly visible as he stood within, in the uncertain light of the fire. Mark saw him.

"Ha!" exclaimed Mark Shadwell, stopping short.

It was involuntary. He had not expected to see Roke Wycherly, who seldom descended from his dressing-room so early.

This "ha!" had in it something of the gasp with which a man might discover an escaped cobra unexpectedly on his hearth-stone.

I think each would have been equally well pleased to have escaped this recognition. But Mark's ejaculation had been too loud, and the recognition was inevitable.

"Charming evening—delicious sunsets you have in this part of the world," said Sir Roke; "you have just the right quantity of vapor; your coloring is perfectly splendid. I don't know whether it is always so at Raby, or only that I am very much in luck. I wonder our artists don't study sunsets more than they do."

Mark had come into the drawing-room. The

last faint flush had nearly died out in the west, and the flicker from the fire chiefly lighted up the room. It showed how pale his face was, and glittered on his fierce eyes, as he looked in a kind of abstraction on his guest.

"Sunset—yes," he said; "I suppose so. I never understood art, or whatever it is. I dare say we have."

"It was particularly beautiful, this evening," said Sir Roke.

"Oh yes, I *do* recollect. I believe it *was*. You're alone here? I hope I'm not very late."

He looked at his watch, and compared it with the clock over the chimney-piece.

"I believe it is *I* who am unusually *early*," said Sir Roke. "We had rather a good game last night; but you pigeoned me, Mark. Suppose you look in on me to-night, and give me my revenge?"

"*No*, thanks, *no*," said Mark, dryly, and even sternly.

Mark's attempt to talk and look as usual had broken down. In that sort of accomplishment the more artificial man beat him easily. But had Sir Roke known the adventure of the little French writing-desk, and what fiery strange eyes had peeped into his foolish little letters, the acting would not have been so easy.

"No, and why not? haven't I an equity—a sort of right to my chance?" laughed Sir Roke, persuasively. The fact is, he reckoned upon the opportunity of the little game and conversation to remove the uncomfortable impression which he knew the surprise of that day had left upon the mind of Mark Shadwell.

"I'll *not* play to-night, thanks," he said, abruptly, and looked for a moment in Sir Roke's face, as if he meditated saying something unusual; but he checked himself, and added, only more in his accustomed way: "I've but a few minutes to dress—sorry to run away and leave you alone; but we shall all be here in two or three minutes."

And glancing again on the dial of the clock, as he might on the face of a man he hated, he disappeared.

Sir Roke leaned with his elbow upon the mantle-piece, and smiled into the looking-glass over it, and laughed a little.

"That fellow is perfectly wild, and ashamed to say what's the matter with him. He's great fun—delicious, isn't it? Trying to smile, pale with rage, he'd like to send a bullet through my head; he's so jealous, and he dare not hint at the cause of his fury. Capital comedy! Inconvenient, perhaps; so we'll quiet him to-night—quiet him to-night—we must part peaceably."

Miss Agnes Marlyn meanwhile had gone up the stairs, and reached her own sequestered room. She shut the door, and candle in hand, surveyed her beautiful features in her modest looking-glass; a little flushed her cheeks were, unnaturally bright her eyes. She had never seen that expression in her face before—excited, defiant, a little wicked and handsome, with a peculiar beauty. The strange look of disdain and shame and triumph met her from the homely glass, and a feeling of admiration thrilled her, and she smiled with a baleful divination.

"Yes, you are beautiful," she whispered, looking sidelong on herself. "There's no one *so* beautiful, and beauty is power. Agnes! Agnes! *is it wise?* Yes, she stoops to conquer," she repeated with the same bitter smile, reciting the title of the play that lay open in the ragged little volume upon her dressing-table; "her little foot will yet rest upon the neck of the man who thinks he has subdued her. Yes, Agnes, what others have done without more cleverness, and with half your beauty, *you* shall do. There is a brilliant future."

A momentary trance and a sigh, and then she glanced at that homely little silver watch that recalled her present poverty, and it suddenly reminded her that it was now near the dinner-hour, and then she made her rapid toilet; and crossing the floor with her candle in her hand, the light fell suddenly on the ruin of her little desk.

There were men and women, I dare say, on whose murdered bodies she could have looked with more composure than upon the fragments of that outraged desk.

Who had done that?

When Robinson Crusoe saw the foot-print on the sand, and felt that his solitary dominion was invaded, and that perhaps the secrets on which his life depended were discovered, he was not, for the moment, chilled with so grim a horror.

"*Who* has done it?"

She stood erect, looking down on it motionless and pale, with a scowl of fear.

Could she have laid it on the mantle-piece, and the cat—that ubiquitous marauder—have knocked it down upon the hearth-stone?

The hypothesis was a momentary relief—momentary only—for she remembered well having returned as she was leaving the room that day, and unlocked it to read a sentence in one of her secret letters, the exact phraseology of which she had forgotten. She distinctly remembered the very spot on the table where she had left it locked.

"Good God! who has been here?"

She kneeled down and rummaged among the *débris* of the rosewood, broken glass, pens, little seals, keys, and the rest, for a second or two.

"Not a letter left. The villain!"

And up she started like a spectre, still staring on the ruin, and accidentally placed her hand upon the letters on the table.

"Oh! ho, ho; here they are," she gasped; and I think if her training had been at all different she would have said "Thank God!" She felt as if she were on the point of fainting.

"I see it all now, that stupid maid. Yes, Mary dropped it, and here she has placed the letters together."

As she murmured this comfort, smiling with white lips, she raised the little packet of letters.

Alas! here was consternation anew. Miss Marlyn was one of those persons born with the genius of neatness, and no letter of hers ever returned to its berth in her desk unsheathed in its proper envelope. But here they were—all disarranged—a few in their envelopes. The greater part just doubled up as they had been laid down by the careless hand of the person who did not think it worth while, it seemed, to conceal the evidence of the outrage.

The three letters of Sir Roke Wycherly lay at the top of the little pile, all out of their envelopes, and one had plainly been crumpled together in a strong hand as if in anger.

Agnes Marlyn fenced with the conclusion no

longer. The thing she had feared—the moment she saw the wreck upon the floor—was no longer disputable.

More accomplished sinners than she would perhaps have been little dismayed after a few minutes, and bethought them of a mode of darning their broken cobwebs. But Miss Agnes Marlyn had some attributes which rather marred her art. There was a fiery vein of passion in her nature; also there was an odd pride, which reared and shied at trifles, of which others would have made nothing. To deceive with her was easy. It was from the vulgarity and detail of clumsy mendacity that she recoiled. She would not construct a card castle of lies that might fall flat at any moment, and leave her stolen bijouterie exposed. Her lies were chiefly of reserve. She had not quite courage for a system of positive falsehood; her pride recoiled from the risk of failure, and who was worth the degradation?

"Who is injured? *I!* He thinks it fine and tragic, this outrage of a brigand. Oh, *quel gentilhomme!* I will not go down this evening."

She sorted her letters—after all they were not very many—she tied them up, and placed the little parcel under her pillow—

"I will keep guard over them here."

The dinner-bell rang; she heard it, and flushed suddenly with a flashing glance toward the door.

"The idea! To think that *I*, after *this*, should sit down at the same table!"

She did not collect or disturb the fragments of her little desk: she looked down upon them with a bitter smile.

"Let them lie as he left them, to reproach a *robber!*" she said.

Then she sat down at the dressing-table.

Storm is not a term to describe the state of her mind. The analogy was rather in the lurid glow, the rolling smoke, and the sudden glare of a crater.

"Whatever vacillation there may have been, whatever chance, he has ended all."

Then came a knock at her door: it was a servant, to tell Miss Marlyn that the little party were at dinner.

Miss Marlyn had a headache, and could not leave her room.

A few minutes later Rachel came into the room. I don't know in what channel Miss Marlyn's thoughts had been running at that moment; but she rose very pale, and turned her large eyes on her companion, with a feeling like a shudder.

"Oh, *you?*" she murmured.

"Yes, Agnes dear; you do look very poorly—you should lie down—can I do any thing for you, you poor little thing?"

"Nothing, dear; *no*."

"I'll stay a little with you, at all events."

"No, dear; don't stay!"

"But you do look so poorly—I *can't* leave you."

"You must leave me; yes, dear, you *must*," said Agnes Marlyn, with a cold, almost a repulsive tone.

"Is it really pain, dear Agnes; or have you heard any thing that grieves you?"

"I've heard nothing—no news—pain is the shortest word."

"But are you vexed with me?" pleaded Rachel.

"Not the least, dear—no—*pain* expresses it very well," said Agnes Marlyn.

"If you really mean pain, poor little Pucelle—"

"Don't call me that—nor any other pet name," said Agnes, abruptly.

"Something has vexed you, dear Agnes, and I am sure you will tell me what it is; but if you are suffering—if it is pain—you must lie down."

"No—no—no, child; you're very good, but you bore me. I won't lie down; I shall remain here—and I shall remain *alone*. They'll wonder what detains you—pray go. By and by, you'll hear me talked over, I dare say; you look at me as if I had two heads"—Agnes laughed coldly—"but you will; and I don't care many pins what's said of me! It's well they can't *hurt* me, or dash me to pieces like *that!*" and she pointed, with a fierce and bitter smile, at her desk.

"Why, it's broken—your little desk—who did it?"

"Cowards!" said Agnes, with a quiet scorn.

"I can't make it out; *what* has occurred? who dared to break it? tell me. You *must tell* me what has happened," exclaimed Rachel, shocked and excited.

"Pray go down, there's a dear girl, for I'm not going to tell you any thing about it; no not a word. I *may*, though, for I'm sure it will be a pleasant story. I shall choose my own time, however; and now I've said all I mean to say for the present—wherever my pain may be, solitude is the best cure for it. Good-bye!"

"You won't allow me to remain, then?"

"*No!*" said Agnes, decisively.

Rachel looked wounded.

"Very well, Agnes; will you allow me to send you some dinner here?"

"What a question! how it shocks the sentiment of the situation! answered the young lady, mockingly. "No, Rachel, seriously, I have been startled, and made angry, made almost faint, and that kind of thing does not leave one much appetite—and pray do believe me, dear, once for all, I choose to be alone. I know you mean kindly, but I must insist on it, and so good-bye, or good-night, or whatever you please to make it."

"Well, then, as you will have it so, I will go; but you'll allow me at least to send you candles, for you are very nearly in the dark?"

Agnes made no answer.

"And I'll run up and see you just now, again," she said.

Still the same ungracious silence.

"Good-bye, dear Pucelle; I hope I shall find you a great deal better."

And as Pucelle made no sign, after another little pause, Rachel Shadwell ran down the stairs again.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE VICAR'S EXORCISM.

The dinner party at Raby that night was not quite so small as you may have supposed; Miss Marlyn's place was unexpectedly filled by the vicar.

The Reverend Stour Temple had to call on his errands at out-of-the-way times, as his parish business and long circuits brought him to th-

doors where they were to be done, unseasonably. He did not enjoy his occasional dinners at Raby. The loving little party at home, with its quaint admirations and perfect harmony, contrasted sweetly with the gloom and comfortless severity of Raby. He had no hope, either, of being of any use to Mark. They never approached the one subject on which the vicar wished to talk with him without uncomfortable results. Mark was conceited and irritable, and, where his superiority was touched, insolent. The vicar was too unbending—shall I say proud?—for his meek and patient calling; and, provided he spoke the thing that was true, he did not perhaps care sufficiently how or when. This great embassage is addressed to creatures weak, volatile, and violent; and needs a diplomacy the wisest, the most sensitive, the most patient. Perhaps, though the vicar was not conscious of it, the fault was not altogether Mark's, that, when they met, they parted no better friends, and with no progress made.

"Ho! Temple! I'm glad you're here; I'm *very* glad!"

"Many thanks! I've just been making inquiries and leaving a note—here it is—from my sister, with a message to Mrs. Shadwell."

"My wife shan't have the message from any one but you; you shall deliver it yourself, and stay and help me to entertain Roke Wycherly."

"You are too good; but they expect me at home."

"The old excuse, but it shan't do now," said Mark, quickly.

"And another; I have not walked to-day, but ridden, so my poor pony stands, with his bridle fastened at the door-steps; he has carried me twenty miles to-day, and awaits me, I dare say, impatiently enough."

"We'll make him comfortable here; we've room enough, I promise you, and though you mightn't suppose it, there is some corn and hay, and I undertake a comfortable supper."

"I'm afraid—" said the vicar, smiling, and shaking his head.

"Don't refuse me this time," said Mark, with an odd entreaty in his manner, which the clergyman observed, and the more that Mark was not very hard to put off with an excuse on ordinary occasions. It struck him that Mark had some special reason for pressing him. There was a little hesitation, and Stour Temple's dark eyes looked for a moment with a grave inquiry in his face.

"Yes, I *see* you will, you're *going* to stay; you *won't* refuse," said Mark Shadwell, and prevailed.

So the after-dinner tête-à-tête with Sir Roke Wycherly was avoided, and no wonder Mark Shadwell disliked it.

There was something excited, Stour Temple thought, in his host's manner, which suggested a suspicion of a quarrel; but Sir Roke's ease and gayety rebuked the idea, and the vicar, still fancying that there was something wrong, did not know exactly what to think.

He was not a man, however, to be a bit put out by the danger of a quarrel, and he chatted quite as usual during dinner, and was glad to perceive that whoever the persons in disgrace might be, Mrs. Shadwell and Rachel were the same as ever.

Miss Marlyn had a headache, the only absent person. Had Mark Shadwell taken some decided step about her, and was she about to leave Raby? Yes, Mark must have had a scene with her, and her headache was a result of it. He looked at Rachel's innocent and pretty face, and he was glad. He had an ill opinion of that beautiful Miss Agnes, and she knew it.

When the ladies departed, these three gentlemen began to talk. They were not well assorted. The vicar was not a flexible man, and Mark Shadwell was in one of his moods. So the conversation did not run smoothly on, but jolted and dragged, and made sudden starts and stops.

The baronet seemed in high spirits. He was amused, he was affable, he was gay. The vicar might have observed that Mark talked little to him, and that his eye was surly, though he did his office, as Sir Roke's host, rather ceremoniously—a coldness, an elevation which amused Sir Roke, I dare say, and the suspicion that it did so made Mark angrier. But the vicar was not a man of observation, and took no trouble to theorize on what he saw. His account to his sister was:

"Sir Roke was very chatty, and seemed better than when I last saw him; he leaves to-morrow. Mr. Shadwell was a little out of spirits."

"And Sir Roke goes away to-morrow?" said his sister.

"Yes, and I'm very glad he does."

"Glad, dear! And why glad?" asked his good sister, a little curious.

"I don't think that Raby is the kind of place that suits Sir Roke. I don't think he cares for their society."

"Dear me! and Mr. Shadwell so agreeable a man when he chooses."

"Very agreeable—as *I* am—in this out-of-the-way corner of the world; but not so agreeable, I am afraid, to a man who sees and hears clever men in the capitals of the world."

"But *why* are you glad he is going? *That* I'm sure is *not* your reason. I mean your *only* one."

"You are right, dear, and I'll tell you my other this day twelvemonth, if I remember it; sooner, perhaps, but not to-night."

At present, however, he is one of the party of three, and the conversation which devolves chiefly upon him and Sir Roke has just taken this turn—

"He was one of those fellows," said the baronet, "who are, by some people, emphatically styled *gentlemen*."

"Don't you think that's rather a vague term, *now*-a-days at least? It *had* a meaning, no doubt. Would you undertake to define it *now?*" interposed Mark Shadwell, suddenly. The vicar fancied a suspicion of a sneer in the question, and was rather confirmed by the lines of Mark's countenance as he asked it.

"It's too complex an idea for me," laughed Sir Roke, with a shake of his head. "Temple must give us his idea—do, pray."

"Don't you think old Chaucer has given us a fair outline of a gentleman? you remember—

"'A knight there was, and that a worthy man,
That from the tyme that he ferst began
To ryden out, he lovede chyvalrye,
Trouthe and honour, freedom and curtesie,
At mortal battles had he ben fiftene,
And foughten for our feith at Tramassene.
And though that he was worthy, he was wys,

And of his port as meke as is a mayde.
He never yit no vilonye ne sayde
In all his lyf, unto no maner wight,
He was a verray perfight gentil knight.'"

The vicar concluded his little recitation, and Mark Shadwell repeated—

"'Truth and honor.' *Yes*, there's the foundation; what do you think of Temple's definition?"

"Not mine—Geoffrey Chaucer's," said the vicar.

"Yes, truth and honor; yes, to be sure, the basis—truth and honor," repeated Sir Roke, with a pleased acquiescence which provoked Mark Shadwell, who intended a sarcasm. "A very good picture of a gentleman, indeed."

"Considering it's so old," said Mark. "Don't you think we have improved upon it, however?"

He meant this for Roke, but the vicar answered in good faith—

"I don't think we have. Christianity and chivalry were the standards; we have Christanity still as the great social rule, but chivalry is but the shadow of a tradition—the two elements entered into the character of a gentleman, and the decay of one has not improved the combination. Don Quixote is very near my idea of a gentleman."

Mark Shadwell laughed low and sarcastically, looking at his wine-glass. I don't know what was in his mind, but Sir Roke fancied that he intended a ludicrous allusion to certain points of resemblance between him and the tall lank knight of La Mancha. It did not sting him. He thought he understood the motive, and Mark's malice amused him therefore. So said he to the vicar—

"Yes, as well as I recollect him, Don Quixote *is* a gentleman — that is, a gentleman gone mad."

"But the more mad he is, the more severely are his high qualities tested. If they stand that strain, they would stand almost any," said the vicar. "A man whose diseased imagination surrounds him with trials and temptations—imaginary though they be—and comes through the ordeal pure, is a thorough gentleman; a mean man would break down under the trial. You see so many men, not actually mad, but hypochondriac, moping in out-of-the-way nooks, who fancy themselves ill-used, and their neighbors in league against them."

"Really, that's very amusing; and I suppose grow quite unlike gentleman?" There was a malicious twinkle in Sir Roke's eye as he said this that made the vicar pause.

"Yes, the character requires so much—such elevation—temper no less than honor—that walking in the light which needs no concealment or deceit."

It was now Mark's turn to approve, and the vicar beginning to feel indistinctly that he was, in vulgar phrase, somehow "putting his foot in it," wound up by quoting Buckingham's fine lines on the death of Lord Fairfax—

"'Both sexes' virtues were in him combined,
He had the fierceness of the manliest mind,
And yet the meekness, too, of womankind:
His soul was filled with truth and honesty,
And with another thing quite out of date,
Called modesty.'"

And so the vicar's lecture ended; and Sir Roke observing that the clergyman suspected some uncomfortableness between the host and his guest, assumed at once a more frank and genial tone, and so ten or fifteen minutes more passed without any renewed symptom of disturbed relations between Mark Shadwell and the baronet.

In the drawing-room the Reverend Stour Temple found himself standing with his tea-cup in his hand beside Mark Shadwell.

Mark was looking down on the faded pattern of the carpet, lost as it seemed in a gloomy rumination; so that when the vicar, for want of something better to say, remarked: "Miss Marlyn has not made her appearance, I see," Mark Shadwell looked up with a sullen smile from his sombre reverie, evidently not knowing what the vicar had said, and he therefore repeated his trifling remark.

"Oh no! a headache, I think, or some young lady's excuse."

"I know—yes," said the vicar.

"Oh, to be sure; she sent us word at dinner," said Mark; "I've been thinking about *that*," he added, after a pause in a lower tone.

"About, do you mean, the—" The Reverend Stour Temple hesitated, and Mark continued the sentence: "The letter you told me of. I—I'm thinking it over. I don't say that anything ought to be done in a moment, but I am—"

The vicar inclined his head attentively as Mark spoke.

"I have," said he, after a sufficient pause to ascertain that Shadwell was not going to add any thing, "a great objection to volunteering advice." The vicar had notwithstanding, I think, rather a weakness in favor of advising, and that, too, in a somewhat commanding tone.

"It is only in cases where my duty distinctly imposes that task upon me that I ever undertake it, and when I did so in this particular case, it was simply because I saw how grave it was, and how very much more serious it might become."

"Yes, I quite understand your view of it. I've been thinking over it; we'll see, and—and as usual I have other things to trouble me. Did you see Carmel Sherlock this evening?"

"No I have not seen him—not for some time. He's quite well, I hope?"

"Oh yes. That is, as well as usual—always odd, you know. Either I am growing a greater fool than I used to be, or he's madder, for he makes me sometimes, in a lonely place like this, with nothing ever to cheer, and a great deal perpetually to press upon one's spirits—he makes me sometimes quite nervous—upon my honor!" And Mark laughed a little uncomfortably. "Not that I think him a witch you know; but he has a knack of saying exactly the most unpleasant thing that it is possible to say—just the thing to jump with your own hypochondriac fancies, and to help this depressing place to make you nervous and miserable. Did you ever feel as if the devil had got about you?"

"The devil, unhappily, is about us all," said the vicar.

"Yes, yes, to be sure; that's the doctrine," acquiesced Shadwell. "By the bye, Temple, do you want timber for that barn-roof? I've found some I *can* cut, to thin the wood. I've a right to that, you know, though those agreeable fel-

lows, my creditors, say I've no right to cut one of my own trees."

"Thanks, you're very good. I'll ask my people when I get home; but I rather think they've got the timber. Very much obliged to you, all the same."

"It's there for you, if you *do* want it, remember," said Mark. "Do you remember some—let me see—five or six years ago, when you used to read some verses of the Bible and say a prayer, when you were here in the evening, before you went away?"

"I make it a habit everywhere, except where I am distinctly forbidden by the master of the house," said the clergyman.

"Yes, of course, you know, where there is no sympathy; but it came into my head to ask you to-night—I can't tell why; I should like it, though I can't go quite with you myself; *won't* you, to-night?"

"As I told you already, I need but permission," said the vicar.

"Can you, Temple, throw any light upon it?" interrupted Sir Roke's voice from the other side of the room. "Was there ever really such a lady as Pope Joan?"

So the vicar was called off to that odd chapter in history, and delivered his little essay upon it for the amusement of Mrs. Shadwell.

What was it that made the room look more than usually gaunt and gloomy that night? Was there less light than usual? It looked so much too large for the people assembled there, and so dismal.

Miss Marlyn's absence, and the uncertainties and surmises which her slight excuse suggested to several of the party, who knew something more than others of real relations, were depressing, and every one knows how contagious dejection, or even embarrassment, is.

"I've asked Temple to revive an old custom," said Mark Shadwell, a little later. "He used to read a few verses of the Bible before he left us; and, thinking it over, I'm sure it can do none of us any harm, and *you* always wished it, Amy."

She smiled. She looked so happy and grateful, that Mark Shadwell, had his nature, or even the moment, been different, would have been touched. It was a point on which she had often timidly pleaded, and been always brusquely overruled by her husband, who cursed the vicar's twaddle summarily, and told his wife she must go to church for that sort of thing, as he was resolved to have no more of it in *his* house. So now this sudden change seemed to her a concession, and she was full of wonder and gratitude at his goodness. Mark Shadwell, I dare say, did not exactly himself know why he wished it. The violence of his agitations, and some thoughts that had crossed his mind that day, had shocked him. He was impelled, perhaps, to try what a sudden return to old associations might do for him. Perhaps, without his suspecting it, there was less of the metaphysical and more of the superstitious in it, and that he had a dim idea of his house requiring this sort of exorcism and fumigation.

Very small was the vicar's congregation—morally, however, in no wise more motley, I dare say, than any other assembled ostensibly to listen to the good words that fall from reading-desk and pulpit. In a different mood, Mark would have enjoyed what would have struck him as the ludicrous in the situation. Sir Roke submitted with an excellent grace. Like a polite man about to be bored by a well-meaning friend, he composed himself to the attitude of attention, and threw the reins, I suppose, on the neck of his fancy, and thought of what he pleased.

Mark, I think, really listened with a closer attention than his pride would have admitted.

The Reverend Stour Temple, with his Bible before him, delivered a brief lecture upon charity.

First came Paul's beautiful and also terrible definition of charity, so hopelessly, as it seems, above human attainment, yet the ideal to which every man must, with all his strength, soul, and mind, aspire, or leave his heart open to the intrusion of those awful sojourners whose residence there is *death*.

"Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts—murders;" and "whosoever *hateth* his brother is a murderer." The *hater*, then, comes distinctly, in God's judgment, under the condemnation of the *murderer;* and what is the *fate* of the murderer? "All murderers shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." Seeing, then, the awful scope of this term "murderer," it behooves each of us to search, with a fearful eye, and the strong light of an honest conscience, every neglected nook of his heart, lest one such frightful guest should lurk there. How mad one day's negligence in this respect! How thin the partition between us and the tremendous phenomena of eternity! "Set thine house in order, for thou must die!" The messenger comes "as a thief in the night." We all expect warning. But the language of God promises none—"Thou fool! *this day* thy soul is required of thee." "Son of man, I will take away from thee the desire of thine eyes at a stroke." And so on, till, having concluded his little discourse, he took his leave, and Mark Shadwell accompanied him to the hall door. If Mark had been in his usual mood, his sense of the ludicrous would have found food enough that night, for when they reached the steps, from the half open window of Carmel Sherlock's lonely chamber came the long-drawn quaverings of his Straduarius.

"What sounds are those?" said the vicar, pausing, with his hand on his pony's mane.

"Nothing; only that queer fellow, Carmel Sherlock, making his horrible music," answered Mark, with a kind of dislike that had none of his usual briskness in it.

"Very weird, odd sounds! Has he a genius for music?" inquired Stour Temple.

"I don't know—I don't care, I mean; I suppose he has, but I hate the melancholy caterwauling he keeps up there; that is, when I'm in specially low spirits, as I don't mind saying I am just now. I wish, Temple, you weren't going away—I wish you could stay here to-night."

Temple laughed, and shook his head.

"I'm serious—I assure you I am, and I rather liked your little sermon to-night; how do you know you mightn't do me some good, if you would stay?" added Mark Shadwell with a dreary half laugh.

"A thousand thanks for your hospitality, but it's quite out of the question; my poor sister, the most nervous being on earth when my hours are

concerned, is sitting up for me, and I have tried her courage as much as I dare, in staying so long as I have; and I have an early call to make in the morning, exactly in the opposite direction. So I must say good-night, you see, and very many thanks for an evening which, for many reasons, I shall long remember with pleasure."

"Good-night, Temple, since so it must be; we did not quarrel once to-night, for a wonder, did we? and I am, I assure you, very sorry to lose you."

And they shook hands much more cordially than they had for a long time, and Shadwell stood by his winged demi-griffin, looking after the receding shadow, already lost in the deeper darkness of the trees that overarch the avenue, and listening to the faint clink of the horse-shoe on the broad way. He waited till he heard the iron gate open and close, and the sound of the horse's hoofs grew more and more distant, till he could distinguish them no longer.

About the same time Carmel Sherlock's dismal minstrelsy quavered into silence, and looking up, Mark Shadwell saw him standing at the open window, leaning out, with his precious fiddle under his arm. He was looking toward the moon, which was beginning to rise, and toward it his other arm was extended and his fingers moved with an odd beckoning or groping motion. Mark fancied that his face wore a fixed smile all this time.

In his then mood he beheld this greeting of his crazy steward to the moon with a strange sense of disgust. The last thing he would have chosen would have been a talk with Carmel Sherlock just then. He drew back, therefore, into the hall, and swung the massive door to with a heavy crash. The picture of Carmel, as he saw him last, stretching, in fancied solitude, from his turret window, and just touched by the dawning moonlight, gathering as it seemed, its rays with his finger-tips, and smiling, remained with a strange tenacity ever after on his brain.

He walked back toward the drawing-room, and paused. There burned in that great wainscoted hall but a solitary candle, at which people lighted their bedroom candles which stood there. He intended to go to his room without seeing Sir Roke. It was a small pleasure to him to inflict this rudeness of omission.

The smiling image of Carmel Sherlock was still before his retina as he pondered for a moment with his hand on the candlestick. "Every question," thought he, "is a dilemma for a poor man—a relief, in one sense, that Sherlock should go; but how on earth should I get on without him?" Even to himself he did not like to admit that Sherlock was so good a bargain, and that great benevolence of which Carmel's simple gratitude made him a little proud, so commercially prudent, and, in fact, so selfish.

"Very good lecture Temple gave us to-night," said Sir Roke's voice near him.

"Yes, I believe so," said Mark, turning toward him.

"Quite intelligible at all events," said Sir Roke, lighting his candle; "but they are very odd people—our clergymen, aren't they? They talk always as if they had the direction of death and damnation, by special appointment, in their own hands, and seem to forget that they are subject to both like other mortals, and that their warnings and threats apply to themselves with at least as much force as to their auditors. By the bye, won't you come in just now, and have our little game of piquet in my room?"

"I'm afraid I can't manage it to-night," said Mark, coldly.

"You've been carrying all before you, you know; you owe me a chance, though: you play so deeply—I mean scientifically—Mark, I'm afraid a shallow poor devil like me has *no* chance with you."

Mark fancied an under-meaning and an irony in this speech. There may not have been any, Sir Roke's smile was never very genuine. Mark's glance fixed for a moment obliquely and sternly on those insincere eyes of the baronet's, and he said: "Well, as you seem to make a point of it, perhaps I shall."

"That's right—that's friendly; I don't think, really, I could sleep, now, without my little game of piquet first, I've so got into the way of it," said Sir Roke, passing on, and up the stairs with a little nod, and a smirk over his shoulder.

CHAPTER XL.

VIOLINA.

MARK SHADWELL knocked at the door of his invalid wife; she was sitting in her dressing-gown, sitting up in her bed, as she held her accustomed consultation with old Wyndle, when he came in.

"Don't send her away—don't interrupt," said he, "I'm in no hurry: in fact, I have next to nothing to say."

Shadwell took up a little book with 1641 on the title-page—George Herbert's poems, which he knew not, and opening it at hap-hazard, he read:

"As I one evening sat before my cell
Me thought a starre did shoot into my lap.
I rose and shook my clothes, as knowing well
That from small fires comes oft no small mishap.

"When suddenly I heard one say,
'Do, as thou usest, disobey,
Expel good motions from thy breast,
Which have the face of fire, but end in rest.'"

He had no sneer now for this, as he might a day or two before. He had been fooled by another, and might possibly, in this graver matter, have been fooling himself. His vanity was prostrate for a time, and his confidence in himself had received a shock. How many "good motions" had he "expelled from his breast!" Well, here, at last, was a good motion, he was about to act on. He would *not* "disobey," as he was wont. But *was* the "motion" celestial, though its effect might be so? Did it not, on the contrary, proceed from jealous fury, revenge, and wounded pride? I believe, notwithstanding, that Shadwell thought he was about to act from cold stern principle here, and rather respected himself therefor.

He turned over, and read:

"Come away,
Make no delay,
Summon all the dust to rise,
Till it stirre and rub the eyes;
While this member jogs the other,
Each one whispering, 'Live ye, brother?'"

"Ay, ay, the resurrection: grant us that, and doomsday, and a great deal follows," muttered Shadwell, with a dejected scoff.

"Good-night, Wyndle," said Mrs. Shadwell.

Mark looked a sullen farewell, and nodded in reply to old Wyndle's courtesy. He got up and shut the door, and said he, not sitting down, but leaning, with his elbow on the chimney-piece:

"I came intending to say—or rather to ask you—whether you think—that Miss Marlyn—"

He stopped—he had not shaped his sentence well—and was near saying more than he had quite made up his mind to say.

"Miss Marlyn! Is there any thing unpleasant, Mark dear?" exclaimed she in great consternation.

"Well, it is only this—I have been seriously turning it over in my mind whether we should have her here any longer; and, in fact, I have pretty nearly made up my mind to part with her."

Mrs. Shadwell gazed at him in a sort of alarm.

"Yes," he continued, "all these things cost money, and I really don't see what good she is doing here; I'm sure she's teaching Rachel *nothing*. I doubt whether so young a person has often learned enough to *have* any thing to communicate, and certainly she can't have the authority of an elder woman."

Mark was already faltering in his purpose. An hour ago, he had made up his mind to dismiss the young lady peremptorily. He meant to tell his wife that he had reason to believe that Agnes Marlyn ought not to be harbored in their house, and to support this by relating the story which the vicar, Stour Temple, had communicated to him. He knew that this step would irrevocably commit him to dismiss her, and now was not quite equal to the task of plucking out the offending right eye, and casting it from him. At a distance, even a little one, he thought the effort would cost him nothing. But now that he had come up to it, he quailed.

"Well, Mark darling, I hope you have very much underrated what Agnes Marlyn has actually done for her. She certainly has improved her playing wonderfully, and she speaks French quite fluently now. Have you tried her lately?"

Mark felt the inconsistency of his answer.

"No, not very lately; but generally, I mean, I am not satisfied. I think they spend their time dawdling about the place, and I dare say Miss Marlyn does just whatever best pleases Rachel, and you know there is no money to throw away, and I thought I'd tell you what I was thinking about—what I *am* thinking about—though I shan't discuss it to-night." He spoke this as brusquely as if she had combated his authority. "I'll tell you more—to-morrow, perhaps. Good-night, Amy," he said, abruptly and calmly enough.

When he had reached the door, Mark Shadwell, suddenly relented, and returned to his wife's bedside.

"You weren't looking well to-night. Do you feel better, Amy?"

"A little tired; but it won't be any thing, thank you, dear Mark."

"Better now, aren't you?"

"Oh! much, since I lay down. And now tell me, Mark darling, how *you* are. I'm so anxious. You have been looking miserably all this evening."

"*I?* I did not know—not worse than usual, I suppose? But I shouldn't wonder."

"Yes, indeed, and very care-worn, my poor Mark. I have been very unhappy about you."

Mark looked at her first with a dark sort of doubt, and then laughed faintly.

"I'm not going to die, or drown myself, Amy. After all, I take pretty good care of myself; nothing can happen to me that will not reach us all pretty equally. I'm worried, of course—always that; but not *ill*—at least, that I know of."

"I was so afraid there had been some ill news—something very bad threatening; but there's nothing?"

"No, nothing particular—nothing. Sometimes one's spirits go down. Every one feels that. You can't control your spirits—they are sometimes worse than at others. Every one knows that sort of thing. I sometimes wish, Amy—that is, I'd give something I could believe all *that*." He tapped with his finger the Bible that lay on the little table by her bed. "But believing, unluckily, isn't a matter of choice any more than loving. No—I assure you there's nothing bad—nothing, in fact, whatever, but just some gloomy ideas—a sort of foreboding, and that makes me fancy I should like to have something to go upon—I mean *belief*, idolatry—any thing. But," he said, with another little laugh, which she fancied was intended to cover a more serious meaning, of which perhaps he was half ashamed, "I dare say *you* pray for me, Amy, and that is better. Good-night, dear." And he kissed her, and departed.

With a solitary candle burning in his odd darksome room, the window opened wide, and a broad slanting moonbeam making a great diamond-shaped diagram of light on the floor, the still landscape lying broad and misty under the moon, visible through the open casement, and the chill night air floating softly in and out, and waving the candle-flame faintly, our friend Carmel Sherlock was passing the hour in a feverish listlessness.

That night his fiddle—I beg pardon, his Straduarius—would not play exactly what he wished, but seemed to take the control of the music, and by an irresistible influence to draw his bow and infuse odd vibrations into his elbow, which resulted in such wild, shapeless, and lamentable melodies as half startled the crazy fiddler himself.

"Ha! ha! That was good!" he would say, with a start; holding his Straduarius up suddenly, and looking it in the face, so to speak, with a suspicious smile. "*I* could not do *that*. It wasn't *I*. No. Ha, ha! you think I don't know when it is *you* and when it is *I*. Bravo, Cremona! Bravo, Straduarius!" and with a scowling smile he shook the bow, which he held upright over his shoulder, at the fiddle. "You or I *master?* You're growing too much for *me*—a man who floats on passion *without a will*—a notable victory, forsooth! I'd smash you sometimes, only you shan't think you can frighten me. I think you are panting a bit, are you? Well, hang there a little while, and recover from your epilepsy, poor little thing! Who knows—who knows?"

I don't know whether Carmel Sherlock ate

opium. His face had that night the peculiar pallid sheen which De Quincy describes as the special symptom of the ecstasy so attained to. A homelier poison for the nerves was on his table—potent green-tea—cold, Chinese fashion; no milk, no sugar, the cup of madness!

A tiny cup of old cock-china, and a cracked and venerable little tea-pot of the same date; these old-world things he picked up where he could, and treasured and loved to live among them; they kept his fancy stirring, and tinted and shaped his dreams. Tiny as was the tea-cup, if you had sipped its measure, once filled with the awful elixir which was his habitual solace, it would have set your brain a dance that would have bereft you of sleep for a night or two, and introduced you to strange fears and stranger shapes. When I look at that old tea-pot replenished with its fatal infusion, standing on his table, I think I see, not a tea-pot, but Carmel Sherlock's magic-lantern.

"I think I've found out your secret," said he, with a laugh, and an odd cunning in his glance. "Dark, is it? There is illumination here. *Books.*"

Standing before his book shelves, he was gently tapping the backs of the tomes with the end of his fiddle-stick. "What"—looking all the time askance at his Straduarius suspended from a nail like one of Bluebeard's beauties—"What says Virgil?

> "'Nam, quæ prima solo ruptis radicibus arbor
> Vellitur, huic atro liquuntur Sanguine guttæ,
> Et terram tabo maculant—
> —gemitus lacrymabilis imo
> Auditur tumulo, et vox reddita fertur ad aures.'

Not Violino — Violina, are you? *feminine*, willful, hysterical. Ha! Traitresse—beloved, mysterious Violina—have I touched the secret of your birth? Wince and tremble—tremble and wince. Yes, it is in the old, old legend, as untraceable in the days of Augustus as now. Ah! Violina my companion, beautiful fiend! You are *detected*. Listen, tremble. No one hears, only you and I. Again in Dryden's verses:

> "'I pulled a plant; with horror I relate,
> A prodigy so strange and full of fate.'

Harken! How foolish you look and guilty! Ha, ha, ha! You would have lived with me, and had my ear, and passed for nothing but an undesigning bit of wood, would you? Clever Violina! Listen! Ha, ha, ha! Ay, my mistress, to lead me on and on to Bedlam! Harken:

> "'The rooted fibres rose; and from the wound,
> Black bloody drops distilled upon the ground,
> Scarce dare I tell the sequel: from the womb
> Of wounded earth, and caverns of the tomb.'

A—a *what?* Oh, Violina, listen! For I *know* you. Come—come, don't you? By heaven! you *do* look paler. Well, well, listen—

> "'A groan, as of a troubled ghost, renew'd
> My fright, and then these dreadful words ensued!'

Now if you could speak, you'd say, 'Thank God! though he came *near* to finding it, he has not *got* the key of my mystery in his fingers!' Be not too sure of that, sweet wayward Violina! Come — come rest, poor thing — rest awhile. But you would say, '*Nay, let me hear all now?*' I know your face so well; did I not see you smile once? Ay! I was a novice then—dropped you, in horror, on my bed—and was afraid of you for five weeks after. Heigho! it has been an odd life. But come—come—why this *shame!* Foolish Violina, don't you see I am no more your dupe — the thing's impossible. I know you, poor Violina; say you see the eye of a corpse move, its face change into a fixed smile for two minutes' time, with a meaning—a meaning suited to *your* thoughts; it is a corpse no more, but a devil. Ha, ha, ha! found out, eh? In the wood of the tree—in the wood of the tree. How deep the root goes—and I so tired.

> "'Non era ancor di la Nesso arrivato.'

Hark! listen! I say—it's *coming*.

> "'Quando noi ci mettemmo per un bosco,
> Che da nessun sentiero era segnato;
> Non frondi verdi, ma di color fosco;
> Non rami schietti, ma nodosi e'nvolti
> Non pomi v'eran, ma stecchi con tosco—

There it is—the forest—an infernal metamorphosis. The same thing, only worse; not the tap roots only, but stems, boughs, foliage, all in hell. Dante's forest of suicides—trees that bleed, and moan, and speak; damned spirits—and *forever* is such a long time. Poor Violina! no such wood for a fiddle. Ha! rest now—rest. The ancient order—turn your face to the wall."

With tender hands and great solicitude he turned the fiddle with its face to the wall, whispering, with a frown of dark compassion: "Rest—rest—rest."

Then again to the open window he went, and looked out, long and in silence; kneeling, with his elbows on the window-stool, and his chin resting on his hands. Oh! what a draught of moonlight, sweet night air, sad mysterious landscape, deserted of all living. Awful, lonely, beloved; darkness so soft, and lights so dim. In that imperfect light all vulgarities and unsightly things vanish, and the beloved scene presents the image of the dead—who are beautiful and purified by distance, and the dim medium of memory.

CHAPTER XLI.

MYSTAGOGUS.

Half an hour passed, I dare say, in that sort of dream, and the moonlight seemed to grow insupportably pure, and the night air—like the water to the swimmer—met his breast with the thrill of a delicious shudder. So a solitary happiness stole over him, the most melancholy and serene — like that of the man who is about to make the last great venture, and die; and has already taken leave of all his miseries and complications.

"Henceforward you are my Ægeria—a phantom only; I shall see you in my solitude and darkness—a picture of light; I shall hear your voice, like notes of distant music, but no more conflict; the tumult of hope forever stilled, and this wild heart is quiet; the first death has passed over it, and all now is retrospect—

> "'There are brains though they moulder that dream in the tomb.'"

With this quotation Carmel Sherlock got to his feet again, took his pipe, and charged it with the biting tobacco he liked, and lighting it, and lighting his second candle also, read and smoked by the light of his candle. Read what? It happened to be the Bible—the Old Testament, for its poetry, philosophy, and profound knowl-

edge of human nature—to him it was no revelation—all *man's* work—but even so, it was tranquillizing and elevating. The fruit of the tree of life, we know, is for believers, and its "leaves are for the healing of the nations."

He dipped into the Psalms; he turned over to Isaiah; and then passed away into the Cyclopean sublimities of Job.

He read, and smoked, and pondered; and came at last to a passage which lighted up his frowning face with a pallid smile:

"This is the portion of a wicked man with God, and the heritage of oppressors, which they shall receive of the Almighty." "Though he heap up silver as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay; He may prepare it, but the just shall put it on, and the innocent shall divide the silver." "The rich man shall lie down, but he shall not be gathered: he openeth his eyes, and he is not. Terrors take hold on him as waters, a tempest stealeth him away in the night."

These grandly sinister words applied themselves; as he read them, each sentence seemed to rise up and point a weird finger at the man he feared and hated—wicked and wealthy. Again and again, over and over, he read them, till they seemed to gain slowly a power over him, and, with a gasp, he started like a man waking himself from a dream that frightened him, and hurriedly he turned over the pages, and looked slowly about him: round upon the strange furniture and decorations of his crooked and dimly-lighted room, through the open casement once more upon the dreamy landscape, and then upon the dial of his Dutch clock, whose diligent ticking, exaggerated by the silence, was the only sound audible. He raised the candle to it and looked. It was near one o'clock. His eye glanced on the Straduarius—Violina, with her face to the wall. He did not care, just then, to remember that she was there, and averted his glance quickly—was ever solitude so utter?

These ancient writings, which used to soothe him, like his narcotic weed, were failing him to-night. He turned back and read, after many others, this passage:

"Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up: It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes, there was silence, and I heard a voice saying—"

As Carmel Sherlock read these words he raised his eyes, and they happened to rest upon the door, which now stood wide open, and a figure was there observing him.

It was Miss Agnes Marlyn, pale, with her candle in her hand, and gazing on him with large steady eyes. Carmel Sherlock rose to his feet, returning her gaze. I don't think he was quite sure that he did not see a ghost. He raised the candle, and stared at her in a way that, at another time, would have made her laugh. But now she did not smile. She looked pale, like himself, and only said "Hush!" and raised her finger warningly.

"Miss Marlyn!" he whispered.

"Yes; may I come in? or will you come to the door for a moment? I dare not speak aloud."

"Come in, yes. She's Miss Marlyn—these lights are flaring—you are not afraid."

He glanced at his fiddle, lying very quiet with its face to the wall. "Young ladies are afraid of ghosts sometimes—*I* used to be, but long habit, and," he looked along the floor, "*never* seeing them, don't encourage it—it's a fancy that might steal you out of your senses."

"I have come to you, Mr. Sherlock, to ask a kindness—a great favor—you did me one once."

"Yes—I know—in the thunder-storm, when I brought that letter for you to the post, and so, between us, we've brought, not a man, but a vampire into the house."

"You were true to me *then*, Mr. Sherlock—in God's name, be true to me *now!* It's only a trifle, and there is not a soul in the house I can trust but you; I have not a friend."

"You are talking to a dead man; I'm no one's friend."

"I know you are kind, I know you are true; you *can* be a friend where one is needed; what I ask is, I assure you, but a trifle; promise me this, at least, that if you refuse me—which I hardly think possible—you won't tell any one what my request was?"

Carmel Sherlock looked at her with a shrewd and shrinking glance, and walked over to the window, looking down on the floor, and having stood for a minute at the open casement, he returned, and said:

"If it has no relation whatever to Miss Rachel Shadwell—I—may."

"*None*; it's only a note, and, I swear to you, it has no reference—not the slightest—to Miss Shadwell."

"Yes—yes—she says true: I remember—a note—go on."

"Just this—I'm making a great confidence, but I know you won't betray me; and even if I were not sure, I can not choose, I must place myself in your hands—"

"Fear nothing; there was a heart *there*," and he knocked his clenched hand at his breast, "now there's a *stone*. I don't know why I asked that question—no—go on—*nil admirari*."

"I want this note delivered *to-night*."

Was she ashamed, or afraid? I don't know which, as thus speaking, in a lowered voice, she hastily placed a little note in Carmel Sherlock's open hand. He turned frowningly to the candle, and, having read its address, turned ashy pale.

"Who put this in your head?" he said, with a ferocious and horror-stricken stare. "Did you dream it—or *how?*"

"I don't know what you mean!" she answered very honestly.

"You are beautiful—yes; see how her color comes and goes, with the beauty of a young Venus—warm, crimson blood—and beautiful shame. Listen to me: *what* put it in your head? I say there's foul play here. Every thing pushing me on!"

It seemed to her that he trembled and looked faint. Her patience was on the verge of breaking down altogether, but she controlled her anger, for the case was urgent, and Carmel her last hope, although, as she said, the service was slight.

"Beautiful? yes; the genii came in different shapes—a serpent a boy, an old man, a girl. Is any man on earth so perplexed as I?"

"I implore of you," she whispered earnestly, "to give this to-night, without fail, into his own

hand; and I trust all to your honor, no one on earth but you and he must know."

"Don't mind your dreams," he said, in a whisper. "Dreams are not sent from God, nor caused by him, but must be demoniacal, since nature is demoniacal, not divine. Come, come, don't *you* enter into the conspiracy."

"You can't suppose I understand one word of what you say," she said at last, a little fiercely; "I ask you, once for all, to deliver that note to-night. You must know *I* can't, and I have told you I shall be ruined if you don't."

"If you had said travel fifty miles before morning, I should have tried; but to Sir Roke Wycherly's door—until the sun has risen—I will *not* go. Why will you trouble me? I was serene."

"You won't give it to-night? Oh! won't you, Mr. Sherlock?"

"I won't give it to-night! What temptation is this, and *whence* do you come? I say *no!*"

"It ought to have reached him before nine o'clock to-night, I had promised it, and my silence he is to read as *no*, and he is odd and violent. He may never forgive it. Oh! Mr. Carmel, *think;* I can't, I won't do it myself, and if it is not done, what is to become of me? An enemy has read my letters—*there!* I've told you—and has learned that which he may use to ruin me, and there is no one to help me but that one bad man, Sir Roke Wycherly; don't you see how *madly* I trust you? and you won't help me, in a matter to *me* impossible, but for you as easy as to walk to that window. Oh, Mr. Carmel! Mr. Carmel, *think!*"

"Yes, easy—*facilis decensus*—evil has come to many, in many shapes. You are warped by some dream—you have had a dream to-night. I don't believe in any exorcism—no, no, no!—they are too strong for us."

"Oh, Mr. Sherlock! do, for God's sake, *do* give him the note to-night!" She stamped, and wrung her hands in her anguish.

"How she persists! How cruel they all are! Take this with you then—the thing's *impossible!* Short is the way, but a gulf unfathomable between us! False sibyl! you say, step boldly. What of the abyss? Have not the demons charge over thee, in their hands to bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone, and return bloody? Listen to your words, and say, are not they the song of a devil? No, no, you shall *not* prevail, beautiful Miss Agnes Marlyn! And you have lifted up the curtain, and showed me that other image. Oh, Rachel! Rachel! Rachel! See what a wreck she would make; this Ariel of the storm, flaming amazement, she knows not, or cares not, to what purpose."

Without another word, her beautiful eyes flashing, she extended her hand.

"Patience!" he said, "only a moment, I'll give it to you, if you like, but listen first; this is reason, this is business. He's asleep now! he's asleep! I—I *know* it! Look there, it's one o'clock! he's asleep by this time, and, I promise this, the edge of the sun's rim shall not have appeared above that upland there in the morning one minute before I place it in his hand. Don't be so crazy, young lady! if you're mad, *I'm* not," and with these stern words he darted a lowering glance at Miss Marlyn.

"Well, perhaps, *yes; do* so, we shall see." With these words she turned, and was leaving the room with a light and quick tread, but she stopped, and said: "Mr. Sherlock, I was going without thanking you; I *do* thank you, pray forgive me; but I am agitated and miserable, farewell!—and oh! *do* not fail me!" She clasped her hands, and looked on him for a moment with such eyes as are raised in shipwreck, and then stole away quickly.

Sherlock followed to the door, and listened with a raised hand and wide-open eyes.

"Not a sound! not a step! not a breath!" Then he paused again for a while, listening.

"Foiled? ha, ha, ha! *Well* that the suspicion crossed me as it did. Ay, spirit, you hear me now? God! what have I seen? What is a mortal creature among them? If thou be a good angel—*come*, oh quiet, quiet! If it be an evil one, lead me away into the desert. Oh, that I had wings like a dove! then would I flee away and be at rest. Can any man escape his destiny?"

So he closed the door.

"Ah, Menander! you say truth—

"Unicuique homini statim nascenti
Adest Dæmon vitæ mystagogus."

He looked round his strange room, stealthily, as if expecting to see the mystagogus of his life revealed; and then, sighing, he leaned his head upon his hand, and seemed to sink into a quiet contemplation.

CHAPTER XLII.

SIR ROKE'S LAST NIGHT AT RABY.

Mark Shadwell was in his study. It was all over between him and his secretary. It was all over, too, with his dream of a great alliance for his daughter. If he had been left to the dismal tenor of his life, if his vanities had not been excited, his ambition awakened, the hell of this reaction would have been spared him. Here he was deluded—insulted; alone with the worm and fire—his despair and his fury.

Around him, on thin old oaken shelves, stood, tier above tier, the dusty tomes, some of which had furnished the now roofless library of Wynderfel—before the Shadwells had migrated, in an evil hour, to Raby—all old enough, and some no doubt curious; but Mark troubled them but little. The nimble spiders spread their nettings across the shelves, and the tiny book-worm was busy with their pages, and heavy drifts of dust lay thick over their buried wit and wisdom. Mark was not a reading man at any time, but just now reading, or even thinking, was quite out of the question. There was only the dull pain of an inexpiable insult and a feverish yearning for revenge.

It was a kind of pleasure to Mark Shadwell, collecting every sheet of Miss Marlyn's writing, copied law papers, copies of letters, and tearing them resolutely into the smallest fragments and throwing them into the grate; and when not a fragment remained unsacrificed, he continued pacing the floor. Whatever his mind was revolving, he was as much startled when a knock came to the door as Carmel Sherlock was that night when Miss Marlyn appeared at his.

It proved to be his wife, wrapped in a night-dress.

"Ah! *you?*—why, what *can* have brought

you here?" said Mark, recovering from his surprise.

"I couldn't sleep, Mark, till I came and told you that you are to do whatever you think best as to parting with Agnes. I shall be *very* sorry—but I know how harassed you are—and I think, Mark, you do her injustice."

Mark was inattentive as she spoke—preoccupied with his own agitating thoughts—but her last phrase rang upon the very nerve that tortured him—like a sentence heard by a man half asleep, without its context, and applied to his dominant idea without thought of improbabilities. Her husband darted a glance of suspicion upon her face. But that face was frank, earnest, and noble.

He was disarmed. He was silent for a time, a transient feeling of pity, genuine and vivid, touched him for a moment. He took her hand and kissed it.

"I'm glad you came, darling, very glad. We can talk of all that another time—but I *am* very glad you came. You mustn't stay here. The room is cold. You must get to your bed, you must indeed. God bless you, darling."

He accompanied her to the door, at which he remained standing for awhile. At the foot of the great staircase she smiled and kissed her hand. He bid her good-night again, with a strange gloomy smile, and waited till that faded apparition and the light of her candle had quite disappeared.

"I am *very* glad," he repeated, stepping back into the room. "It would not have done had I gone to Roke's room. I might have said more than I intended; his sneering calmness would have led me on, and now I'll secure myself."

He locked his door on the inside, and placed the key in his escritoire, which he locked also.

"And now, Master Roke," said he, "I must think *twice* before I visit you; and whatever accident brought her down to see me, she has saved me that *annoyance*—saved me from something bad, perhaps—from something *very* bad."

Mark began to feel the nervous re-action that follows upon the subsidence of the malignant emotions. He had been talking to himself in the solitude of this room, and in the silence his own words seemed still to haunt his ears, like a dialogue of other voices urging him on.

He sat down by the smoldering fire, he leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes. There was that about him, however, which scared away sleep. Now and then he muttered with a kind of abhorrence, like a man repelling violently a painful thought, "No, *no*, let him go—*let* him go."

And sometimes he would open his eyes, and look for a moment at the door, and then at the escritoire, with the keys of which his fingers in his pocket were playing, and then back again at the door, and so once more at the escritoire; and then with a sudden shrug, like a shiver, he would start up and walk about the room, and read the names on the backs of the old books, and so wander about for awhile, and then sit down again, looking ruefully into the embers; and then he would look at his watch—half past twelve only!—and wonder how slowly the time lagged. And then, after awhile, the same sort of thing would occur over again, and then again, and Mark Shadwell once more was wandering restlessly about his room; and he looked at his watch. It was now a quarter past one.

* * * * *

Sir Roke Wycherly was in gay spirits that night. He amused himself thinking of his cousin Mark.

"The beast!" he thought. "He's quite wild about this little romance of ours. He has been bullying that pretty little rogue. There has been a row. I suppose he has put her in a devil of a passion—he'll not find it easy to frighten her, though—and her little *billet* has not come; it will though. Mark won't come, quite past his hour now, and I shouldn't wonder if my little note reached me, somehow, after all's quiet." And he smiled slily and pleasantly toward the door. "I may as well wait a little—yes, and we'll get that fellow, Clewson, out of the way. Poor wretch! he does look awfully tired. I forgot him sitting up last night, and we are to be off to-morrow, and will have a great deal to do."

He was accounting to himself, good-naturedly, for getting Clewson out of his way. The well-trained Clewson did look a little surprised at this considerate dismissal. Glad he was to receive it, however. He made two or three trifling arrangements very quietly and withdrew, and got to his bed, where he quickly fell asleep.

"Yes, poor devil, we'll do without him to-night, and—hey? was that a step? No—no—fancy."

He listened, notwithstanding, for awhile; and he got up very quietly, opening his door softly, and smiling up and down the gallery, with the candle high above his head; but all seemed quiet, and so far as the light reached was deserted.

"Not yet—not yet—I wager my life, it will be, though—only a word— a little bit of paper no bigger than a card."

By this time he had again closed the door, and was standing in his dressing-gown by the card-table, where lay the pack with which he and Mark were to have fought their battle—not their great one.

"If he had only come—I wish he would—a fellow in that plight is always amusing, and a little bit of quiet comedy would not have been amiss to-night—and that charming little woman. She would not have popped in her note at the wrong moment—far too clever to put her pretty little foot in it—and, egad! no great harm if she did. We shall be all far enough to-morrow, and the curtain goes down on a strong situation and a spirited tableau."

Then Sir Roke listened again, and again there was nothing. And he bethought him of a letter to that Pepys, Adderly, to whom he had written before, to expect him at Scarbrook. He wrote:

"My dear Adderly,—I have next to nothing to add to my last letter, except that you may take as absolute all that I then described as *probable* respecting the little romance which has amused and piqued me for some time. I am going to town, as I said, to-morrow, and I shan't leave for Scarbrook till Wednesday; but your charming married niece, Mrs. Hyde, will reach Scarbrook with her maid, on Thursday morning. You need not tell the people there that I'm coming down. I shall appear, simply by accident—you don't expect me—no one expects me. I think I have said quite enough. Make your

niece, of course, as happy and comfortable as possible—but very quietly, please. I shan't stay there myself a week, and I shall be off before it becomes known; and now the whole plot is before you, and do pray be on the alert, and attend to these few plain directions. Ever, dear Adderly, yours sincerely, R. W."

Roke Wycherly shut up his letter and sealed it. "And now, I think, all's ready," said he, lifting his hands with a little wave, like a man who has completed a piece of work and means to enjoy himself and rest. And then he listened again, but there was nothing—and he yawned.

"It will come before half an hour," said he. "What an affectation! The little gypsy fancies her hesitations impose upon me. Well, we must amuse them—why not a note, if she likes it?—only I'm growing uncomfortably sleepy. Hang their caprices, they *are* so selfish, one and all."

Sir Roke took up his French Review, but it made him yawn more; and then, with his handkerchief, he touched his temples with eau-de-cologne, and then he looked at his watch that he had placed on his table, and muttered an execration upon the tortoise-pace of time—irrevocable time!

Too slow for you, its flight, Sir Roke! *Is* it?

And then, growing peevish, he got up and opened his door again, and listened, and gaped dismally up and down the empty gallery.

You remember the passage in Faustus:

"*Mephistopheles.* I am not free; a little obstacle,
I did not see, confines me—
The druid foot upon the threshold traced.
Faustus. The Pentagram?"

Sir Roke closed his door gently, but with a cross and dismal face. Again he looks at his watch. A quarter past one! And he sits down, and takes up his French Review again, and reads and nods, and reads a little more and nods again, and drops asleep in his easy-chair, with his back toward the door, and all became quite still and silent.

Pity, Sir Roke, no pentagram was traced upon your threshold.

Sir Roke's bedroom opens upon the great gallery, and in the same chamber, in the farther wall, another door gives access to a dressing-room, beyond which, again, lies Mr. Clewson's bedroom, which opens upon a lobby at the head of the back stairs.

Mr. Clewson was fast asleep. But the habit of attending his master's call at all hours throughout the night had made his sleep easily interrupted.

He was startled from his sleep by a sound from his master's room. It was a crash as if of something thrown with violence upon the floor and broken to pieces. He sat up in his bed listening, and heard a furious gabbling, in which he fancied distinguished the words "God" and "wretch." The whole thing hardly lasted a minute, and suddenly subsided.

Mr. Clewson, not knowing what to make of it, glided out of his bed, and into the dressing-room. There was always a candle burning at night in the dressing-room, for if Sir Roke happened to want additional light, he was not a man to wait while his servant was groping for matches. Clewson took this candle in his hand, but there was light visible through the key-hole, and Sir Roke did not call him. He listened at the door, but he heard his master, shuffling about the room, he thought, in his slippers, and making his customary arrangements before getting into his bed.

So Mr. Clewson concluded that Sir Roke had accidentally knocked down one of the old china vases which the care and good taste of ancient Mrs. Wyndle had placed upon the mantle-piece. And he knew that Sir Roke, when an accident happened, could snarl and curse in soliloquy, with great spirit.

So Clewson went back to his bed, a little out of humor, and made a few cynical remarks upon the "governor's" delight in disturbing people. But being weary, his temper did not keep him long awake, and he was soon again in a sound sleep.

Things had promised fairly that night for Mr. Clewson's slumber, but his repose was destined to be broken.

After some time passed in dreamless sleep, without a summons, without a start, Mr. Clewson on a sudden opened his eyes. There was a large window in his room, without shutters, and through it the moon shone brightly.

In this light Mr. Clewson saw a man, with a wide-awake hat on, standing a little way off, and the character of the face and figure were such that for some seconds he did not know whether it was real or the image of a dream still fixed upon his retina.

CHAPTER XLIII.

SLEEP, AND HIS BROTHER DEATH.

He opened his eyes, as I have said, and beheld Carmel Sherlock standing, not far from his bed, in the moonlight, ghastly pale, his eyes fixed upon him with a cold glitter. His hands were clasped together, and there was a steel curb-chain about one of them, to which two or three large keys were attached.

The newly-awakened man sat up in his bed staring at him, and neither spoke. But Carmel drew near, and in the broad moonlight he could plainly see that one side of his face was covered with blood, and that his features wore an expression of agony and menace. Mr. Clewson's horror increased, as Carmel Sherlock came silently nearer and nearer to him, so that, with an effort, he found his tongue, and said, but in an undertone, for even then the training of Sir Roke's servant prevailed:

"I say, Mr. Sherlock, what is it? I say, sir—please—what do you *want?*"

There was no answer, but, he fancied, a faint groan; and he now saw in Carmel's clasped fingers there was something more than the chain I have mentioned. He saw, too, that his hands were covered with blood.

"Why, sir—Mr. Sherlock, I say—my *God!* sir, you're all over blood!" said Clewson freezing with horror.

Carmel Sherlock, like a sleep-walker awakened, recoiled at the sound of his voice, and as he did so, he dropped something from his hand, which rolled to some little distance on the floor, and his gaze was still fixed on Clewson.

"Blood—blood—I suppose so! Do you know me?" he whispered.

"Know you—to be sure; but you're hurt, Mr. Sherlock, sir. You've got a knock over the head, or something," said Clewson.

"Yes, sir—I'm very ill."

"I'll help you, sir, to wash your head, Mr. Sherlock; and I've some plaster, sir; and your hand—it's cut, isn't it?" said Mr. Clewson, putting his foot out of the bed.

"Eh? who told you my hand's cut—*cut? That* it is, to the bone—to the bone!"

"I'll give you a lift, Mr. Sherlock, sir, and will get it all right, if you please."

"*Hush!* Was that a *call*, sir, from Sir Roke's room—Sir Roke Wycherly, Baronet?" said Carmel Sherlock.

"No, sir—nothink, Mr. Sherlock—*no!*" said the man, listening nevertheless.

"A *gibe*, sir; an angel by my ear; shall we go and help him?" whispered Sherlock, wildly.

"But he *did* not call, sir! The smallest trifle wakens him—he was getting to bed, Mr. Sherlock, more than an hour ago. I'm sure I wouldn't wake him for somethink—he's quiet now."

"Lethali somno exporrectus," said Sherlock, and sighed. "Shall we come?"

"Where?" asked Clewson.

"To Sir Roke."

"I *tell* you, let him alone—*can't* you? He's *asleep*," whispered Clewson, testily.

"Ay, ay; Homerus Θάνατον et Ὕπνον Germanos finxit. In there, sir, frater fratrem amplectitur—brother embraces brother. My hand!"

"Let me do it up for you, sir; pray do?" said Clewson, again essaying to rise.

"No, sir, I'll manage it—blood, to be sure. Let Justice drink it; it is the milk she lives on, if a man catches the blade instead of the handle! an image of life—the way of death—a topsy-turvy world."

All this time he was groping on the floor, and looking for what he had dropped. He found it, and stood up.

Mr. Clewson could not see it distinctly, for he thrust the hand that held it quickly under the breast of his coat, but he did see a momentary metallic gleam. It was either a very small bright-barreled pistol, or, as he inclined to conclude, a knife.

"Aye, sir, the altar of Justice; between this and there a path of blood—the via lactea—and there you'll find her sacrifice—like herself—blind, and cold as marble!"

Mr. Clewson seeing Carmel Sherlock, about whose growing eccentricities the servants had been talking, now again approching his bedside, with the same dreadful expression of feature, and the unexplained blood-marks, and a knife in his hand, could stand his uncomfortable sensations no longer.

"Jest you get away with you please; don't mind a-coming to *me*, sir. What brings you here at this hour? it can't be far from daylight."

"Ay, ay," said Carmel Sherlock, and a strange craft and suspicion suddenly appeared in his face, and his eyes seemed to read Mr. Clewson's thoughts with a dangerous scrutiny. "Ay, very unseasonable; but when a man cuts his hand, you wouldn't have him go on bleeding—blood is life, you know—when a friend could stanch it; so I came up the back stair, and then hesitated to waken you."

"Well I'll do it up for you, if you like," began Clewson.

"No, I remember I have got it—better plaster—in my own room—the *best*—and it's hardly bleeding now. Thanks, sir; thanks, good Samaritan."

"And what did you want of Sir Roke, sir?"

"Well, Mrs. Wyndle says, *you* told her he has a medicine-chest with every thing in it, and I thought you might bring me to his room quietly; but I remembered he keeps his door bolted, and we couldn't get in without disturbing him; and I don't care about it, sir, for it has turned out next to nothing; so I'll go to my bed—good-night, sir."

Carmel, for a second or two after this little speech was closed, continued to fix a shrinking gaze of inquiry on Clewson, and suddenly repeated his "good-night!" and turned to depart.

"Good-night, sir," said Clewson more civilly.

And the moment Carmel Sherlock had left the room and closed the door, cautious Mr. Clewson skipped noiselessly to it, from his bed, and bolted it lest Mr. Sherlock should change his mind and return. That Mr. Sherlock was more than half-crazed was the opinion of the servants' hall. The plight he was in to-night was by no means re-assuring, and Mr. Clewson was very well pleased, for the first time in his life, at the precaution of that old-fashioned falling bolt, which secured Sir Roke's door on the inside.

When he was about to step once more into his bed, his attention was arrested by a sound in the stable-yard, of which his window commanded a full view. To the window therefore he returned, and thence he saw Carmel Sherlock cross the paved yard toward the stables.

It was a brilliant frosty moonlight; the walls, the ivy, the pavement, showed all, in intense whiteness, and the figure of Carmel Sherlock as he walked swiftly across the pavement, was sharply defined, and its shadow lay clear and black on the stones. A great stone trough stands in front of the huge old pump, and against its side lay a thick-pronged pitchfork, a broom, and a shovel, and the sight of these homely implements seemed to arrest his attention, for he stopped suddenly, and took up the pitchfork and turned it over in his hands, and then placed it leaning against the pump; and he took from the breast-pocket of his coat a knife—there was no mistake about it now—and turned haft and blade quickly about in his hands. Then suddenly, he looked up at the house, at the same time thrusting the knife into his pocket again, searching window after window with his glance. Mr. Clewson stepped back quickly, forgetting that there was no light in his room.

His eyes having run quickly along the windows, Mr. Sherlock took the pitchfork again in his hands, and went direct to a little iron grating, which let off the drain near the stable-door, and having first tried to pass the knife through its bars in vain, he then, with the prong of the pitchfork, forced two of them a little apart, and so dropped the knife in, and then carefully re-adjusted the grating. Then he looked up again at the windows, and proceeded to wash his hands and face at the stone tank before the pump.

Mr. Clewson watched him, with much curiosity, through these procedures; hoping that he had been about no mischief, well-knowing what an oddity he was, and willing to suppose the best, yet with a most uncomfortable misgiving.

When Carmel Sherlock had completed his simple ablutions he walked to the stable-door, unlocked it, and disappeared for a little, returning in a few minutes leading the horse he usually rode saddled and bridled. Mr. Clewson then remembered that he had heard that Mr. Sherlock, when he had to visit a distant part of the estate, sometimes set out as early as three o'clock in the morning. He watched him till he unlocked the outer door and led the horse out of the yard. Mr. Clewson looked at his watch, in the light which the moon afforded, and found that it was half-past three; and then he returned to his bed a good deal quieted.

"He's a very quiet man is Mr. Sherlock. I never heard of his quarreling with no one. A nice man, and knows a deal o' book-learning, he does. It's just one of them early rides; and he's cut his finger, and he took his revenge o' the knife—he is sich a queer un. Well, he's broke up my night's rest a bit, he has—the fool!"

And with this remark, rather cold, Mr. Clewson laid himself surlily down in his bed for the third time that night, and was soon fast asleep.

CHAPTER XLIV.

APPLEBURY CHURCH.

At the pleasant old town of Applebury there was a cattle-fair next morning. By daybreak the whole town was in a bustle; and the High Street, which expands near the old Town Hall into a great, irregular, paved square, was already thronged with men, women and children, and stalls and booth of all sorts. Applebury is thirteen miles away from Raby, and only eleven from the Vicarage.

Two cows and a troop of sheep, belonging to my friend the Reverend Stour Temple, were there; and his brother, honest Roger, had, by earnest entreaty, supported by the eloquence of Miss Barbara, who had long thought he wanted a holiday, persuaded him to ride to Applebury next morning.

Down the narrow road, then, overhung by noble ash-trees, which enters the antique town from the north, while the pleasant morning sun was glittering on the old gilt vane and clock of the church-tower, rode, on their trotting ponies, a little cavalcade of three—thin Stour Temple, fat Roger, and Charlie Mordant. Honest Roger, smiling cosily, and jogging breathlessly in his saddle, young Mordant in high spirits, and the vicar's thin brown features smiling also pleasently, and all the better of the ride in the exhilarating air of early morning.

A little way down they had to slacken their pace, finding themselves involved among droves of cattle, farmers on horseback, and pedestrians, all tending into the town; and Bonnie came to a walk with a very red face and a great sigh of relief.

"I told you, Stour,—now didn't I?—you'd like it," said honest Roger, when they sat at breakfast in the Bull Inn parlor, with the broad fat backs of two farmers, busy over a bargain, against the window-stone, and a view of the steep roof and gilded clock of the Town Hall, the noble old tree that grows there, and the ever-moving panorama beneath it, touched with the pleasant morning sun. "I see you are enjoying it, my poor fellow;" and smiling inquiringly into his face, he pressed his brother's knee gently with his fat hand.

"So I do, Bonnie," said Stour, with a very sweet smile, and pressing his own hand over Bonnie's kindly paw. "Very much; five years since I was in Applebury before. I never saw the old place look so pleasant before; and I'm very much obliged to you and Barbara for making me come."

I think the kind blue eyes and fat smile of Bonnie, and the affectionate patting of his honest hand, had a great deal to do with the charm of the scene. "There's some good in you and Barbara, I allow, though you *are* a pair of despots."

So said the vicar, still smiling; and in his heart there welled up the strong and tender love that would have said: "Bonnie and Barbara—brother and sister—my treasures! What are long walks, and now and then a trouble, and an obscure threadbare life, *if* only in the bright warm sunshine of your love, my darlings! For whom I bless God every hour."

"We are very comfortable, aren't we?" said Roger, with a delighted little chuckle. "We are enjoying ourselves immensely; we are so cosy—ain't we?"

"*Awfully!*" acquiesced Mordant. "What a quoer little town it is! Lucky to have such a fine day. *There's* an odd name, isn't it? On that red board with the gold frame over there. Don't you see?—on that square brick house."

"Yes—yes—*there*," said Roger, looking across, and as he did so blushing an ingenuous crimson. The name was Amos Martyr. Charles Mordant had made his little remark in all simplicity; and honest Roger, who was a little near-sighted, I believe, fancied, though with amazement, that he read a more interesting name.

"Where is she? By Jove! you have seen some one," said Charlie, gaily, and running to the window. "I must see her."

"I didn't; upon my honor! No she's not there."

"Who?" demanded Mordant.

"Come, who is she, Roger?" urged Stour Temple, who enjoyed his good brother's flights into the land of romance.

"That fellow has been at his tricks," said Roger, with a smile of bashful reproach at Charlie.

"*I* have?" exclaimed Charlie.

"Ho—ho—yes; do ask him what he has been doing over *there*," said Roger, smiling and shaking his head.

"I never was over there in my life! Upon my honor, sir, I never was," exclaimed Charles Mordant earnestly, observing the direction of honest Roger's short arm, and not knowing what accusation might be intended by his fat friend, smiling sheepishly.

"Not you—you rogue! I say, Stour, ask him whether he knows how to use a paint-brush. By Jove! though, there's Dick Larcom and his

son with the cows," exclaimed Roger, interrupting his own rude and mysterious allusions. "Let us come out, for goodness sake, and hear what offers he has got."

So forth they sallied; and in the hall Roger said in Charlie Mordant's ear:

"Isn't it delightful we got poor Stour to come with us, glorious fellow! And killing himself with work—a perfect slave; but you must run over, like a dear fellow, and make them take that thing down; it oughtn't to have been there at all—do, *do* now; and here's Dick. *Stour*, here's Dick Larcom with the cows."

So forth they sallied among stalls and booths, and piles of gingerbread, and baskets of apples, in pursuit of Dick Larcom, who was making his way to the green with the vicar's cattle. But the vicar, being less interested than as a wise farmer he ought to have been, and having an easy confidence that among his more skilled friends the cattle would be managed well enough, wandered away into devious lanes, and finally paid a visit to the old church, whose beautiful porch is so like that of the ancient church at Holyhead; and seeing that the door was open, the sexton being there employed in his vocation, the vicar stepped into the hallowed shade, taking off his hat.

This church of Applebury is, I think, about the darkest in England, the eastern window being of stained glass and under the shadow of two enormous elm-trees. Coming out of the bright sun, this gloom strikes the visitor so that one would fancy there was scarcely light anywhere in the building to read by. He stood for a little just within the threshold of the door, looking up and around, as such visitors will; and glancing at his left hand, some five or six yards away from the entrance, he saw a man, in a loose wrapper, with a hat in his hand, standing, and, as he felt, staring at him. The vicar could not see his features distinctly, only his white eyeballs, as in silence he watched him without motion.

One of the frequenters of this fair of Applebury the vicar took him to be, who had sauntered there like himself, to see what the inside of the old church was like.

The man made a short, shuffling step or two backward, as if irresolute, and the vicar, fancying a recognition, instinctively made a step or two in advance, and saw Carmel Sherlock, just with that amount of surprise which in imperfect light induces a momentary uncertainty.

"You've come here for *me*, sir?" demanded Sherlock, in tones that were low and stern.

"Far from it," answered the vicar, with a slight smile. "I was a little surprised, on the contrary, to see you here; and indeed in this light it is not easy to know any one."

"I've been here longer—in tenebris—and every thing is clear. And I saw you distinctly; there is some of your cattle at the fair, sir—and so we have found one another. You had no news since last night from Raby?"

"*No*, none at all," answered the vicar, looking at him attentively.

"Well, I've a message. There's no one following you—no one outside—no one watching us?"

And Carmel Sherlock, who had been drawing near, peeped from the door, and through the quiet porch.

"No, I'm quite alone here—my brother and young Mr. Mordant are at the fair; but what is the message?"

"Only this, sir; they want you up at Raby; there is great trouble there, sir—an unexpected calamity, and it is your duty to be there. You may be of use—it is a house of affliction today."

"What has happened?—who is ill, or—*who* is it?" asked Stour Temple.

"*I* have nothing, sir, to tell more than—Ha! yes, I hear the horse."

"Where are you going *now*, Mr. Sherlock?" inquired the vicar.

"*Home*, sir," said he, with a start.

"Do pray let me know how I can be of use, and *what* has happened," pleaded Stour Temple, who was very much alarmed.

"They'll tell you when you get there—if they like. There's no more for me to say than I *have* said. Receive me as a messenger, sir, who tells what is needful, and no more. This morning, sir, Raby is a house of trouble, and *you* will be expected there. Leave this town, and be where you are wanted; *that* is my message. You will do as pleases you best. Ha! here it is."

And Carmel Sherlock stepped quickly through the porch, in front of which stood a horse saddled, a boy holding its bridle.

"I beg pardon, Mr. Sherlock," said the vicar, following and laying his hand upon his arm; "pray relieve me, if you can—pray tell me—*is* any one at Raby *dead?*"

"I've told you all I *have* to tell," said Carmel Sherlock, with a dark stare, and stamping with wild impatience on the flags. "Just *that*—they *want* you." And in another moment he was in the saddle, and, riding at a swift pace down the solitary lane that runs in front of the old church, was immediately out of sight. Stour Temple fancied he had never seen any one, in full possession of his physical strength and activity, look so ill as Carmel Sherlock. There was also that in his countenance he had never seen before. Altogether, he did not well know what to make of him.

"Suppose the poor fellow's mad," thought the vicar. "I should have my ride to Raby for nothing; but no, it has not come to that—always eccentric, but quite sound—where he chooses. No, it is not a vision. Something has happened."

Now so it was, the vicar could no longer feel happy sauntering about the little town of Applebury, and back to the Bull Inn went he, and he called for the reckoning, and called for his nag, and he left a note for Roger, who he knew was well-furnished with money, accounting for his departure; and he mounted his beast, and trotted away by the old road that leads to Raby.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE DARK CHAMBER OF WHITE DEATH.

It was little past ten o'clock when the vicar, amid the sweet and solemn landscape that surrounds Raby, approached the lordly gate-way of that mansion, with the defiant demi-griffins, with wings expanded, keeping guard upon its lofty piers. With an anxiety that increased as he approached, Stour Temple scrutinized the hall door and the windows in search of some sign that might help his suspense to a conclusion. There was no one in the gate-house, an occurrence not rare in those disorderly precincts. He dismounted under the aerial shadow of the huge trees that embower the gate-way, and led his horse in upon the stately and melancholy avenue.

Silent and lifeless the great old mansion stood before him, and door or window gave no sign. Who could it be? What had happened? The image that constantly presented itself to his imagination was horrible and piteous enough. Had that gloomy, morbid, miserable man, Mark Shadwell, made away with himself in one of his paroxysms of malign despair? and if so, what a spectacle of agony awaited him!

That poor weak lady, adoring that unhappy and ungrateful man, could she survive so frightful a shock? As he approached the other pair of demi-griffins, with up-turned wings and monstrous eyes and beaks, awaiting him by the steps, and looked at the closed hall door, his heart sank within him, and he felt almost faint as he anticipated the scene that awaited him.

He threw the bridle of his pony over the corner of the balustrade that flanks the steps on either side, and rang the bell. He had to repeat his summons more than once before the door was opened.

"How is Mrs. Shadwell?" inquired the vicar.

She was pretty well.

"And Miss Shadwell?"

The same answer. But the servant was looking at him with a stern countenance, which indicated something untold and dreadful.

"And your master—*he's* well, I hope?" said the vicar, trying to read the man's answer in his face, as he put the question.

He was well also. Stour Temple began to think that Carmel Sherlock's warning was but a symptom of his crazy state.

"Has Mr. Sherlock returned?" inquired the vicar.

"No, sir," said the man, with a shake of his head and a very odd look in the vicar's eyes.

"Can I see your master?" asked Stour Temple, who was willing to clear the matter up without more delay.

"I'll inquire, sir," said the man.

"Say it is *I*—perhaps he'll see me."

"Yes, sir."

And the man walked across the spacious hall to the library door. It was locked; and he returned, and said—

"He has locked the door, sir, please;" and looked as if he would add, "I dare not disturb him."

"Well—thanks—don't mind; I'll try myself if he can see me." The vicar knocked several times, and on a sudden the door half opened, and Mark Shadwell presented himself standing on the threshold.

"Ho! Temple? So you've come. I'm not sorry—sent for—eh?"

"Well, yes; I got a kind of message, but very vague. I only heard you were in trouble," said Stour Temple, struck by something suspicious and stony in the countenance of Mark Shadwell, and looking into his eyes with a dark and anxious inquiry.

"Trouble?—*I!*—well, I can't say I am; come in." The vicar entered, and Mark shut the door. "Hardly trouble—but in a very painful situation. You did not hear about that—that—unfortunate fellow"—and saying this he averted his eyes—"Roke Wycherly?"

"No, nothing; he's—*what* is it?"

"He's—he's *dead;* and what makes it worse, he has been *killed.*" Mark spoke nearly in a whisper, and looked very grim and pale.

"Good God!" exclaimed the vicar, while his face paled with horror, "do you mean he has been *murdered?*"

"*Yes*—there can't be a doubt. No one could have inflicted those wounds on himself; and *he* was not a man to hurt himself."

"Is he *quite* dead?"

"Yes; it must have happened as early as sunrise. At eight o'clock he was cold. It's shocking, isn't it?—quite well last night, you know; and *now!* I could scarcely go in myself. I never could bear the sight of a dead person since I saw my poor father—it's a hateful sight; but I told them to leave every thing as it was exactly, and nothing has been disturbed. There must be an inquest, of course. I'll have the whole thing searched out, and all as light as day."

"Certainly," acquiesced Temple; "and, depend upon it, you'll succeed—these things always discover themselves. I'm very sorry to find you in so painful and horrible a situation. If I can be of any use I shall be only too happy."

"If it is not too painful, I should be so much obliged, Temple, if you would just go and look at what has happened, and examine the room, and make a note of any thing that strikes you. I should much prefer that all evidence of that kind should come from some one not an inmate of the house, and some one both intelligent and unexceptionable; people are talking, I dare say, already. When did you hear?"

"Well, it was at Applebury, this morning; there's a fair there."

"Oh yes—quite natural; they were talking about it, I dare say," said Mark, in a low tone.

"No; I met Carmel Sherlock, who gave me your message," said the vicar.

"Carmel Sherlock! At Applebury? Good heaven! Then he's perfectly *mad!*"

Looking at Mark Shadwell as he spoke, the vicar could see hardly any thing but his flaming eyes, and a face ghastly white.

"I hope to God you arrested him?"

"Arrested him? *No*—why?"

"Why? Because *he* it was who indubitably murdered Roke Wycherly last night. Did you leave him still at the fair?"

It was now the vicar's turn to look horror-struck.

"Is it *credible?* Mr. Sherlock—so gentle and harmless," said the vicar, after a pause of several seconds.

"The man has been growing mad this long time—madder than any of us *thought.* Clewson's

evidence—Clewson, Roke's servant, you know—is quite conclusive on that point. Was he arrested?"

"No. I tell you, *no* one, I'm certain, knew any thing of it. It can't have been much past seven when I saw him. There did seem something very strange in his looks and manner; and he urged me to come here, as if he had a message. I thought you had sent for me; but he would not say what had happened—only that something had occurred to cause great affliction, I fancied it, or trouble here. Would not it be well to give a hint to Cripps, the policeman in Raby, to look after the wretched man—I trust a lunatic—who has committed this dreadful crime?"

"So I was just thinking," said Mark, with a haggard start. "You saw him at about seven o'clock at Applebury fair?"

"Yes; he rode away from the church porch, where he seemed to have appointed a boy to meet him with his horse, in a westerly direction, along the quiet little road that passes there."

"How was he mounted?" asked Mark, ringing the bell.

"A strong bay pony, or a cob."

"Ha! He rode the old black hunter from this—the horse you've often seen him on. He must have picked up the other at the fair, or hired it, perhaps. How was he dressed?"

"Very much as usual, I think; a loose outside wrapper, and one of those broad-leafed, pliable felt hats, with a low round crown—black—and a pair of those leather things, like jack-boots, on his legs; and he was looking ill, very ill, indeed."

Mark shook his head, and smiled drearily.

"Ha! well he may," said he. "Tell Clewson to come here for a moment," he continued, addressing the servant who presented himself at the door, "and tell them to put the horse to the tax-cart instantly; and do you come back here in five minutes. I'm so much obliged to you, Temple, for this call. I'll just make a note of what you tell me, and send it, and Clewson's information, which I took this morning, to Cripps; and I'll tell my fellow to drive him over to Applebury, and put the people there on the alert, and I think we *must* catch him—don't you?"

"I'm quite certain of it; no fugitive, as a rule, can escape—the telegraph nets them round. There are two or three police at Applebury, and the railway not far; give them the description, and they will take care to transmit it."

"I do hope they may catch him—there are so many enemies—are the people talking about it? I don't know—not yet I suppose—but they'd stick at nothing, some of them; they'd say I favored that wretched fellow's escape. I'm so *delighted* you came. I tell you the truth, I felt *miserably* till you came. I think they must find him, and then it will all be cleared up; at the same time, *mad* the poor wretch is. Roke heard him at his door—he told us all about it—one night before, trying to get in, very cautiously—egad! it's a very odd business—and he opened the door suddenly, and there was Sherlock face to face with him; and he seemed put out and half frightened, and talked some nonsense. You may rely on it he intended that night getting in, and murdering the poor fellow, as he did at last. But, be it how it may, could any thing be more unlucky for me, surrounded as I am with backbiters and slanderers; the d—d hornets will be all up, in a cloud, about my ears. But let them say their say; provided it is within the limits of law, they can't hurt *me*—eh? I'll be vigorous and energetic as the hardest of them. I pity the wretched madman, of course, but I could not—I *couldn't* connive at his escape—eh?"

"Of course not, my dear Shadwell; no one could be weak enough to expect any such thing from you. You take the plain view of the matter. There are very few cases, indeed, in which duty is any thing but simple."

"This is the key; the room is locked. I have not been there since early this morning, for a few minutes, with Clewson. He will show you the way, and point out every thing to you. I shan't visit it again until the coroner comes. So many enemies, God knows what they might say."

"Well, I hope you mistake them," said the clergyman.

"I'd rather not trust them; I'll leave nothing in their power. Here's Clewson," said Mark, as the man entered, very grave, very quiet, with air and looks beseeming the dismal occasion; and I am sure he would much have preferred that the occurrence had not happened, for his place was a good one. "You'll move nothing; do you mind: every thing is to be left precisely as you find it," said Mark, addressing Mr. Clewson, who with this charge accompanied the vicar, and led him by many rooms and passages to the back-stairs, which, having mounted, they unlocked the door of the room which had been Clewson's.

Now Mr. Clewson pointed out the spot where Carmel had stood, and he showed bloody footprints leading to it, through the dressing-room, more distinctly marked the nearer it approached to the scene of the catastrophe, the room from which it started.

The vicar hesitated for a moment at the door of the room where Sir Roke had slept; a sensation of fear and repugnance chilled him as he was about to step into the scene of crime. He opened the door. One window-shutter and curtain was partly open. It was a sudden change from the clear light of the dressing-room to the shadow of this chamber, which contained the object he almost feared to see. A cross light from a far window, leaving the greater part of the room in darkness, just touched an odd-looking figure that reclined in the cushioned chair, some way off, by the table.

"*There?*" whispered the vicar, interrogatively, indicating the indistinct figure with his hand.

"Yes, sir, please; in his dressing-gown and slippers, with the cap on as he always wore when he put off his wig, which he had 'ung it on the small block, by the looking-glass. Sir Roke's caps, sir, was made to cover his ears, that he shouldn't take cold, he 'aving 'ad a bad habscess in his left ear, last year, sir, in Florence, where we was for three months—"

"Is that door open?" whispered Temple, nodding toward the door that opened on the great gallery.

"We found it locked, sir, on the hinside; Sir Roke, being shy-like, or something, he al-

ways locked his door before he put his wig hoff."

"I'll go over and see," said the vicar, with a sigh that was nearly a groan; "we'll not open the shutter; we must move nothing. Hush!—*yes!*"

He was now standing about two steps away from the sitting, or rather reclining figure. There was Sir Roke, leaning back in the great cushioned chair. He had on a thick flowered silk dressing-gown, and a quilted white night-cap, that covered his ears, and was tied under his chin, giving a grotesque air to his costume. His chin was sunk upon his breast. Upon his thin lips was a faint piteous smirk; his eyes were fixed in a dim stare, as if upon something illimitably remote and awful. There was in this dead face a strange discord of fear and mockery. The narrow line of light from the partially opened shutter touched its features, and its odd white coiffure. The vicar had no notion that Sir Roke could have looked so old and worn; such a tracery of fine lines and wrinkles—lines of dissimulation and selfishness it seemed to him, as well as of exhaustion. In the thin high nose and almost transparent nostrils; in the thin lips and haggard face, was recognizable no one trait of manliness. You might have mistaken the face for that of a wicked old woman who had died while listening to an amusing scandal.

The right arm of the corpse was extended on the table, and the slender hand was cramped and drawn together as if in the effort to clutch something. The fingers of the other were closed on the arm of the chair.

The evidences of violence were only too apparent. Blood had flowed from the corner of the mouth, and stained the lip and chin with a black streak. There was a dreadful wound in the throat, nearly under the jaw, about an inch away from the ear—a stab with a broad-bladed knife or dagger. There was plainly another fearful wound on the breast, for the shirt, which the opening in the dressing-gown displayed, was cut, and immediately below this the white was stained with a broad red gush. There must have been other wounds, the vicar thought, for the carpet was saturated with a wide pool of blood.

With the frown of a horrible compassion, the vicar gazed in silence upon the image before him for some time.

"My God!" he exclaimed at last with a great sigh, "who could have dreamed this of Sherlock?—so refined and gentle, and yet such a cruel villain! *Mad*, I hope he may prove. What depths below depths in the heart of man. Lord, in thee only is safety, thou Rock of Ages!"

With clasped hands, the vicar, looking up, spoke thus, and then turned away, and treading lightly and speaking low, from point to point they went together in the room.

Every now and again Stour Temple made a little note as he had promised Mark Shadwell. These little penciled memoranda were after all but few, and were nearly as follows:

"Sir Roke Wycherley's bedroom, examined by me, Stour Temple, Clk., in presence of Mr. T. Clewson, on —, the ——, presented the following indications, etc.:

"The carpet, to the extent of about a yard in one direction and a little more in the other, is saturated with a pool of blood, partly in front, partly at the side of the chair in which the body reclines, and toward the right side of the body.

"This blood seems to have discharged itself from the body, partly through the trouser of the right leg, which is stained by it, and the slipper of the right foot shows marks of having been full of blood, which flowed over.

"The fragments of a large decanter of cut-glass lie on the floor at the same side, and partly under the table.

"The three shutters and curtains of the three windows are closed, with the exception of that which is farthest from the bed, a small portion of which is open.

"The door of the room which opens upon the great gallery is locked, and the handle of the key and the brass of the door bear marks of what appears to me to be blood.

"There are foot-prints, indicated by blood, leading from the chair to the door already mentioned, and also to that of the dressing-room next Sir Roke's bedroom, across the floor of it, and upon the floor of Mr. T. Clewson's bedroom, the latter very faintly traceable.

"On the carpet is a sharp-pointed knife with a broad blade; it is very much marked with blood. The cloth of this table is dragged to one side. On the table is one letter addressed.

"There are pens, an ink bottle, and a blotting-book on the floor.

"There is a small table with a cloth on it and a pack of cards standing near the wall, with no mark of having been disturbed.

"There are four silver candlesticks on a small marble table at the left side of the body, the candles in which seem to have burned out in their sockets. STOUR TEMPLE, Clerk."

And then the date.

Having completed his survey of these rooms, Stour Temple hesitated for a moment, and then returned and looked once more at the dead man reclining in the chair. There were the fixed attitude, the odd smile, the awful clouded gaze. It is these returning visits after an interval of absence, the strange literality of the impression reproduced, the mobile lines and transient gleams of living emotion fixed where the moment found them, the immutable smile, the unchanged compression of the lip, the stern brow and changeless eye, that strike one with a sense of that awful anomaly in a world of life—the inexorable and irrevocable character of the change!

"The thing which I greatly feared is come upon me," repeated the vicar, almost unconsciously, as he looked woefully upon this spectacle. "Ay, ay, as a thief in the night! Let us go, Mr. Clewson, if you please."

Accordingly, the vicar and the servant *emeritus* took their departure, carefully locking the doors, and these chambers and their lifeless tenant were abandoned to silence and solitude.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE EVE OF THE INQUEST.

"WELL, you've seen it?" said Shadwell, gloomily, when the vicar had entered the study again.

"Yes," said Temple, very pale. "I'm almost sorry I *have* seen it. I shan't easily recover the impression. I wish I could forget it."

"I'm afraid I've been very unreasonable and thoughtless. I dare say I should have made my request to some other friend, although, except your brother Roger, I can hardly reckon another," said Mark, sourly.

"Pray, don't mistake me. I would willingly do a great deal more, and for people in whom I took a much less interest, in so deplorable an emergency. I only meant to say how very awfully that scene has impressed me. But I do assure you I'm only anxious to be of any use in my power." And so saying, he extended his hand to Mark, who took it, and held it for a moment, looking gloomily at him.

"I wrote to the coroner at eight o'clock this morning," said he, "to entreat that he would summon his jury without any loss of time, and I have just had a letter from him to say they will be here at eleven o'clock to-morrow. Would it be asking too much if I were to beg that you and your brother in this, as you say, *emergency*, would come here at that hour? Think as you may. I have enemies, and bitter enemies, some of whom will be no doubt upon this jury. I don't say *avowed* enemies—it may be even unconscious ones—but on this account the more unscrupulous. Of course such fellows as Mervyn and Desborough would be only too glad to reflect upon me."

"Reflect upon *you!*—I don't see how that can be, though," said the vicar.

"Why, they may say that I ought to have dismissed that wretched Sherlock long ago—perhaps I ought. I don't pretend to say; the event at least seems to say so, but you know my motive in keeping him. You know how I trusted him with my own interests, and how impossible it was that any of us—crazy in some of his fancies as we might suppose him—could have believed that there was the smallest danger in harboring him. He was, as you say, so gentle and patient, and with so much refinement and cultivation."

"Certainly; I never was so much shocked and astonished—the last man in the world I should have suspected," said Stour Temple.

"I can't go quite that length, however," said Shadwell. "He had his malignities, and I have heard some things since that induce me to think that he had taken one of his intense antipathies against the man up stairs. He spoke in an odd menacing way about him to some of the servants, and I should not like the jury to tack a censure upon me, or any other insult, to their verdict."

"And you wish me and Roger to attend? You may, with God's permission, reckon absolutely upon that."

"Thanks; one does not like to be totally without a friend to stand by one, you know, in the midst of such neighbors as I have about me."

"I've made some notes," said the vicar, holding his open pocket-book in his fingers.

"May I look?" asked Mark, extending his hand.

"Certainly," said the clergyman.

And Mark, taking it to the window, read these memoranda very carefully.

"You mention foot-prints marked with blood?" said Shadwell. "Clewson said something of them also. You mention here that they are traceable to the bedroom door which opens on the great gallery. Did you look out to see whether the marks were continued on the floor of the gallery?"

"No," said Stour Temple, "for there were marks of blood upon the key, and I thought you were so clear that nothing should be disturbed."

"Quite right! Thank you; exactly what I would have wished; but suppose we go now—it did not strike me before. We can take Clewson with us, and examine the floor."

They did go and made their scrutiny, but not the slightest trace appeared.

Shadwell and the vicar paused upon the lobby. "God sends nothing in vain," said the vicar, laying his hand on Mark's arm; "even crime and death. His warnings are whispered to some, and spoken in thunders to others. This tragedy, does it not, my dear sir, speak trumpet-tongued to you? That wretched Mr. Sherlock had no religion, neither had that unhappy man who has perished by his hand. Is there not a double lesson in this? How near, even in its unlikeliest forms, death may be, and how vain are the securities afforded by unaided human nature against the access of even the most monstrous crimes! I have often talked on the subject of revealed religion to you; but what are man's pleadings compared with the eloquence of these tremendous events? Lay the lesson, then, I implore you, to your heart."

"I'm sure you mean well, Temple, I always thought so. But each man reads his own lessons for himself. I must read mine—as best I may. I don't suppose one man is better than another in the eye of God. It is all temperament and circumstance. I'll talk it over with you whenever you like, except *now*. I'm half distracted, that's the truth."

"I can well suppose it, Mr. Shadwell. Men of the world don't avow it; but there is too much real paganism—here in the light of the Gospel—to escape the most careless eye. Oh! Mr. Shadwell, think of this sudden death and sudden crime, and trust no more to the ever-shifting illusions of scepticism, and to the fancied virtues of human nature."

Mark Shadwell was holding the banister with a hard grasp, and looking, with a contracted face, darkly on the ground, like a man in sudden pain, while the vicar spoke, and when he ceased he continued motionless, and seemed to listen for more of this homily for some seconds; and then, with a sigh, he said—

"Would you like to see my poor wife? She has been very low and nervous about this miserable business, and I am certain would be the better of a few minutes' talk with you."

"If you think she would really wish it, I shall be most happy," assented the clergyman.

"I *know* it," said Shadwell, and led him along the gallery to the door of Mrs. Shadwell's sitting-room, where he found that lady, frightened, nervous, almost hysterical. Mark Shadwell had intended going in, but he stopped suddenly at the threshold, merely saying—

"Amy, I've asked Mr. Temple to pay you a few minutes' visit—he is here."

And angrily, you would have fancied, he walk' d

swiftly away, down the gallery, and then to the left, and so down the stairs, and into his library once more; where, pale and exhausted, he threw himself into a chair, and with a deep groan he said—

"Black a thing as death is, I wish I were dead instead of him—I wish to God I were!"

Stour Temple took his departure; Mark heard him cross the hall. He did not care to see him again; and he heard the tramp of his horse, as he rode away, and did not wish to recall him.

Mark had received one of those shocks which, for awhile, convert men into the ideal of an anchorite. To fast, to watch, with one idea always fluttering, like an imprisoned bird, in his brain; and one choking emotion rising from his heart—was his present doom. Pale, *distrait*, nervous, furious at times when disturbed by message or question, or even a tap at his door, he occupied his library in utter solitude. Sunset came with its solemn glare; the cold moon rose, and sheeted the landscape in white. Mark lighted his candles and closed his shutters, and drew his curtains for himself. He hated the faces of his servants; they seemed to be reading him with prying eyes, and coming again and again on pretexts to his door for the purpose. After one or two such calls, met with unaccountable bursts of fury, he secured the door. He stirred the fire. He sat before it, looking sullenly among its embers, and then peeping slowly back, over his shoulder, he would get up, and stand with his back to the fire, looking drearily from corner to corner, and then he would pour out a glass of sherry and drink it in haste.

Slowly wore the night away. He was horribly nervous. All kinds of fancies beset and startled him. He thought he heard the handle of his door turned, and stood watching it, with a freezing gaze, for minutes. He opened the shutters and drew the curtains of the window next him; but there was a tall plant just before it, that in the white moonlight took the shape of a man, standing there nodding and swaying himself slowly back or forward; and look where he would, he still saw obliquely this teasing object, and could not rest till he had closed shutters and curtains again. Later in the night came the distant howling of a dog—dismalest of sounds—and on a sudden he fancied he heard a sharp whisper at the window say *Wycherly*. It was the twitter, perhaps, of some passing night-bird, or a spray of the rose-tree brushing lightly on the glass. But he would have sworn that he had heard that ominous name so syllabled.

Chilled and fixed, he listened for its repetition, but it came not. He fancied then that it might have been uttered by Carmel Sherlock, whom he had begun to fear with a dreadful antipathy. He dared not open the shutter. He fancied he should see that strange face, with its eyes and lips to the window-pane.

It was hard to move his mind from the hated subject under which it lay in a monotonous pain. An image was always before him. The only thought allied to life and action was that of the inquest that the day would bring; and there, too, among the sinister faces of unfriendly neighbors, was the same odious image.

To his sherry, for courage, Mark Shadwell often had recourse through that hateful night. At last, worn out, he fell into a slumber in his chair, from which he waked with a cry, he knew not why uttered. It was still in his ears, and the walls seemed ringing with it as he looked about him. The candles were expiring in the sockets. He started up and drew the curtains, and was glad to see the grey light of morning through the chinks of the shutters.

"Oh! glad was the knight when he heard the cock crow,
His enemies trembled and left him."

So now that first detested night was over, and the old house of Raby was dimly lighted by the dawning day that was to witness the inquest upon the body of the murdered baronet.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE CORONER.

As the day wore on, strange faces began to appear. Men rode up to the door and dismounted, sending the horses round to the stables. Broughams, dog-carts, all sorts of vehicles drove to the open hall door, and set down their masters. The coroner had come, and Doctor Lincott from Gilleston. The Reverend Stour Temple was there, and our honest friend Roger, his fat face charged with a supernatural solemnity.

Some stood on the steps talking of fairs and prices in a decent undertone, as people sometimes mention irrelative subjects at funerals. The hall door stood wide open as that of an inn, and in the hall were various little groups, earnest and grave in their talk. Others were in the two drawing-rooms. Mark Shadwell was among them, pale and grave. Very formal, too, with these guests, whose dispositions toward himself he suspected.

And now the hour having arrived, the coroner opened his court in the hall of Raby, and the jury were sworn. He then told them what they each knew already—the nature of the inquiry, and the general character of the tragedy they were to investigate.

Then at his own request Mr. Shadwell was sworn, and informed the jury of the circumstance under which Sir Roke Wycherly had made his brief sojourn at Raby; he described the particulars of his parting with him on the fatal night; also, generally, the state in which he found his room in the morning on visiting it with Clewson, who gave the alarm. He mentioned, also, that the Reverend Stour Temple had visited it later in the day, and made, at his request, a note of every thing that struck him as at all bearing on the subject of their inquiry, and he, Mark Shadwell, had done this, and also retained possession of the key of the room; the door of which he had kept locked, lest there should be any uncertainty as to whether the indications so supplied had been ever so little disturbed, either by accident or design.

He then described Carmel Sherlock: he was eccentric, hypochondriac, in some points a little crazed almost; but he was habitually gentle. He should not have dreamed of suspecting him of violence had it not been for the distinct evidence of Clewson, supported by that of the vicar, whose strange interview with him at Appleby he mentioned. It was, however, certain that Carmel Sherlock had conceived an intense but unaccountable antipathy to Sir Roke Wycherly,

and that he had made no secret of that feeling, as only too many witnesses were ready to prove.

The coroner and jury then went up stairs to view the body and inspect the room. Shadwell accompanied them, as did Clewson, at his suggestion.

The master of Raby, pale but collected, pointed out to them what was most striking in the disarrangements of the room.

Clewson was sworn here, and described Sir Roke's habits.

"You say," said one of the jurors, "that Sir Roke Wycherly always locked the door opening upon the great gallery before going to his bed; but he had not gone to bed, he was still seated at the table when he was stabbed. What leads you to the conclusion that the door in question had been locked before the murder took place?"

"He always locked his door before he removed his wig; he had a great objection any one should see him without it. And the wig being took off, it's in that 'ere box, sir, and his night-cap on, I'm certain sure his door *was* locked."

"How do you account for the blood on the handle of the key?" persisted this gentleman; "does not it look as if the murderer locked the door after he had committed the crime, and with his hand bloody?"

"Well, it might be; but I think Sir Roke had locked it. No, he wouldn't, by no chance, leave it open for no one to come in and see him settling of his wig. No, no, never; it could not be, sir."

"The murderer, then, must have been thinking of going out by that door, and stained the key with blood, and you think Mr. Sherlock must have entered this room as he went out of it, by the other door, and across the dressing-room, and so through your room. Now recollect yourself. Did you hear any sound? Were you, that you can remember, even partially wakened by any noise in your room?"

"No, sir, not *in* my room."

"Are we to understand, however, that you *were* awakened by a noise before Mr. Sherlock's visit to your room?" interposed Mr. Mervyn, a tall, gaunt gentleman, with a high grey head, and the dress of another generation—blue coat and brass buttons, and a shirt frill, and gaiters buttoned up to his knee.

"Yes, sir."

"What was it?"

Clewson described what has been mentioned a few pages before this.

"You went to sleep after this?"

"Yes, sir."

"And for how long did you sleep before you awoke again and saw Mr. Sherlock?"

"Well it might have been an hour, and it might not have been so long."

"Could it have been so short a time as a quarter of an hour?"

"It might, sir."

Shadwell here whispered in the vicar's ear, who nodded, and whispered something in the ear of his neighbor, Mr. Digges, who was upon the jury, and Digges asked the witness—

"Might it have been less?"

"Well it might, sir."

"Were you sleepy?"

"Very much so, sir."

"And dropped off again as fast as you were waked?"

"Just so, sir."

"A bit of a snooze, and then called up, as you might sitting in a chair?"

"Well it was, sir, very much like that."

As soon as they had thoroughly examined the room, the jury, led by the coroner, and accompanied by Mark Shadwell and the lookers-on, returned to the hall.

There was a good deal of evidence to show the ill-feeling which Sherlock seemed to cherish against the deceased.

Then came an odd part of the evidence.

Clewson had found upon the coverlet of the bed, on entering the room in the morning, a small dagger, or creese, with a wavy blade, both the blade and handle of which were stained with blood, and a mark which resembled the pressure of a closed hand was also indicated indistinctly by a blurred brown stain on the coverlet—that of discolored blood.

Now this creese was the property of Carmel Sherlock, and what was still more to the point, it was proved to have been in his hand at about two o'clock on the night of the murder. The evidence upon this point arose thus—

Attached to Raby is a great old orchard, in the centre of which is a sort of small square tower of brick with a loft in it, which is known by the name of "The Watch." Some of the apples had been lately stolen, and some timber cut at night not far from the house; and to check these depredations two men had been stationed in "The Watch," who took it by turns to visit the woods that lie near the house.

One of these—Will Hedgelong by name—was, according to this arrangement, sauntering near the house of Raby on the night in question at about two o'clock. He saw a light in Carmel Sherlock's window, which, appearing through a piece of red curtain that hung at one side of the window, looked like a fire in the room. Apprehending danger to the house, the man ran to the point from which the light came, and saw Carmel Sherlock leaning on the window-sill and looking out.

On seeing him Carmel Sherlock appeared to be startled, but after they had exchanged a few words, talked just as usual. He asked the man to wait for a moment, as he had something to give him. He saw Sherlock move about the room, and he came again to the window, and told him to go to the hall door, where Sherlock met him. He came out upon the steps, having unlocked and unbarred the door. He had a wide-awake hat and a loose coat on, and a pair of leggings—the dress he usually wore when he rode any distance. Carmel looked pale and flurried. Hedgelong thought there was something "queer about him, more than usual. It certainly was not drink." He gave him a note, with a request that he would give it to the servant to lay in the morning on the breakfast-table. This letter was produced, and read. It was addressed, "For the most honored of the family of Shadwell, of Raby," and contained only these words—

"To that one, if any, who will be good enough to regret him, Carmel Sherlock, departing from Raby, worn out and disabused, with a heart full of gratitude and anguish, bids farewell."

As Carmel Sherlock placed this note in his

hand, saying, "I have to ride to Wodely, early, and shan't be here, so don't fail," Hedgelong saw something shining in his left hand, which was the knife found on the bed in Sir Roke's room.

"What light had you to see it by?" asked Mr. Mervyn.

"It was full moon, and a clear sky, sir—very bright the knife was in his hand, careless-like. I saw it quite plain; the blade goes back and forward like a grig in the water, with a twist to and fro, and the handle's black, with two silver rings. I knew it, when I saw it in his hand."

"Had you seen it before?"

"Yes, sir. Mr. Sherlock showed it to me about three weeks ago; it was hung over his fireplace."

"Is *that* the knife?"

"It is, sir."

"Had he the knife still in his hand when he left you on the night on which Sir Roke Wycherly lost his life?"

"No, sir. He saw me a looking at it. I think he forgot it was in his hand, and he dropped it into his pocket, in haste. When he gave me the letter he stepped back, and shut the hall door, softly. I can't read. I did not know how odd the address on the letter was. It was about eight o'clock, it was; I gave it to the butler before it was known in the house Sir Roke was murdered. He looked on it, and shook his head, as much as to say there wás summat queer in it, as *I* took it."

Now the oddity of the evidence respecting the instrument by which Sir Roke was deprived of life was *this*: the knife which Clewson had seen him secrete in the stable-yard was also produced, and proved to be a dagger which Sir Roke had purchased in Spain. Sir Roke did not carry it about his person. It happened to lie on his dressing-table. Clewson could point out the spot. He could swear that it was Sir Roke's dagger. It was as much stained with blood as the other. The drain was dry, and it had got no wet to wash the blood off.

"You heard voices, and a noise of something broken in Sir Roke Wycherly's room some time, you can't exactly say how long, before you saw Sherlock in your room?"

"I heard something broke, and I heard Sir Roke's voice, and I heard him walking about the room when I went into the dressing-room."

"How do you know it was *he* who was walking there?" asked Mr. Mervyn.

"Well, I thought it must be he—"

"You can only say you heard steps—is that it?" said old Mr. Mervyn, with half-closed eyes, and inclining his ear.

"Well—*yes*—that's all,"

"Was it your *master's* step?—did you recognize his step?" asked the coroner.

"I took it, it must be his step; but I couldn't swear."

"Did you mention that circumstance to Mr. Shadwell in the morning?" asked Mr. Mervyn, in the same attitude of shrewd attention.

"Yes, sir."

Mark Shadwell confirmed this statement with a nod of assent, but he was looking pale and angry.

"Then you heard a crash of something thrown down—you heard a voice or voices, and recognized Sir Roke's, speaking in excitement, and afterward heard steps, you can't say *whose* steps, passing to and fro in the room, in silence?"

"Yes, sir, that's about *it*," said Clewson.

Mark Shadwell, who sat close behind the vicar, leaning on the back of his chair, was now standing upright, and he said:

"You'll allow me, Mr. Coroner, to say a word. It seems to me that an imputation is indirectly thrown upon me, as if I had in my evidence suppressed what the witness Clewson told me in the morning. I need not tell you, sir, and others here, who know me better"—he glanced at the Reverend Stour Temple—"than ever Mr. Mervyn is likely to do, that I am incapable of suppressing any thing in my evidence. I can't conceive a motive. If my attention had been called to that particular incident, I should, of course, have remembered all about it. What the man told me was simply that he heard a crash, followed, as he believed, by Roke Wycherly's voice, exerted in anger; he said it was his habit to talk by himself, and that a trifle like the breaking of that glass was enough to put him out of temper—he had a violent temper—that he went to the door and heard him—he did not then speak as if there was any doubt about it—walking about the room, that he returned to bed, and was awakened by the appearance of Carmel Sherlock, under the circumstances which he described, in his room, and that he could not tell how short might have been his interval of sleep when he was thus awakened. No sort of suspicion crossed my mind in consequence of this statement, and as to those knives, or whatever you call them, I've no clear conception what Mr. Mervyn imagines or surmises. I suppose he will let us know, and whatever it is, I venture to predict, it will turn out to be another mare's nest."

Mark Shadwell bent a sarcastic and agitated scowl upon the shrewd old gentleman, who said, with a cynical coolness—

"Pray, Mr. Coroner, allow me one remark, as a juror. I shall do my duty, and sift *every* thing. I rather think it's important to know whether more persons than one were engaged in this atrocious murder."

"*Oh*, I *see*," said Shadwell.

"I'm sorry, sir, I can't hear *you*, Mr. Shadwell," said the coroner.

"You see," continued Mr. Mervyn, addressing the coroner, "here are two deadly weapons, each stained with blood, each used in this murder. If people see nothing *odd* in this, *I* can't give them eyes, or brains."

"Now, I *really* must *request*—all this is quite irregular," said the coroner, beseechingly.

"*Odd!*" repeated Mark, grimly, and neither regarding the coroner's appeal nor Stour Temple's distressed look, which might have acted on him like a pluck by the coat. "The *whole* thing's odd, and I can't see why one particular singularity is seized upon for the purpose of suggesting that there is an undetected murderer still hid among this family, except for the odd satisfaction of inflicting pain upon me, by casting a scandal on my household."

"Now, Mr. Shadwell, I beg you'll observe this kind of interruption I can not tolerate," said the coroner, growing peremptory; "we have been interrupted, gentlemen, by an *altercа-*

tion, and I must say I have heard *no* imputation to warrant any *feeling*—"

"It is indifferent to me what motives may be imputed in some quarters. I shall do my duty all the same, to the best of my power," said old Mervyn, dryly.

"The better you do it, the better we are pleased," retorted Shadwell. These two gentlemen, who loved not one another, were growing more bitter as the dialogue proceeded, constantly springing up in gleams of anger like an inperfectly-extinguished fire, and causing the presiding functionary more trouble than the venerable chief of the nursery suffers, when children forget Dr. Watts's exhortations about "little hands" and "one another's eyes." But this subsided for a time, and the sterner business of the day proceeded.

While the examination of Clewson was continued, in course of which the letter of Pepys Adderly, which it was thought might possibly throw a light on the motive of the murderer, was read, the surgeon was up stairs, and made a careful inspection of the body.

The result of this was that he discovered three deep wounds, one about an inch from the extremity of the ear, nearly under the left jaw, entering the throat, and passing almost through the neck; another, a little at the left side of the breast, which had pierced the heart; and a third, with the same effect, about an inch below it. It turned out oddly that it was impossible to determine by which of the weapons the wounds were inflicted, for the length of each blade was the same, and although the creese looked the narrower of the two, its wavy shape made up for this, and produced a gash as nearly as possible of exactly the same width. It was impossible then to determine which of these instruments had been employed, or whether only one or both, in accomplishing the murder.

In addition to these deep and fatal wounds, the palm and fingers of the right hand were deeply cut. There was also a severe contusion on the forehead and a cut there, but inflicted either by a blunt instrument, or by the fist of his assailant.

The jury returned to Sir Roke's room to view the body and the room again, and, after another minute scrutiny, they arrived substantially at this conclusion—that Sir Roke, having written his letter, and then read for a time, fell asleep in his chair; that while he slept, Carmel Sherlock had entered the room to execute his guilty purpose; that, as he approached the chair, stealthily, the baronet awoke; that a brief struggle ensued, during which the decanter had been thrown to the ground, and the exclamations, imperfectly heard by Clewson, had been uttered, and Sir Roke almost instantaneously struck back in his chair by a blow on the forehead, had lain there stunned, while he was dispatched by the three dagger-wounds which have been described, having clutched the blade of the knife in his hand during the struggle, and thus received those deep wounds in its palm and fingers which the surgeon had mentioned.

In this struggle, one or other of two things may have happened: either Sir Roke may have had his own dagger, for some reason, within reach—for he had already talked to several persons of a visit which had surprised him from Carmel Sherlock, who had attempted to enter his room on a former occasion at a very late hour at night, and whom, by suddenly opening the door, he had discovered and disconcerted; he might on this night have placed the weapon beside him, from a nervous fancy that Sherlock might repeat the visit he had then attempted, and may have seized and lost it in the struggle—Sherlock wresting it from his hand, and in doing so dropping his own knife, and committing the murder with Sir Roke's, which he had secured. Or the murder may have been perpetrated with his own creese; whichever weapon fell upon the ground, at the side of Sir Roke's chair, would have been as effectually stained with blood as if it had been actully used in stabbing him. This seemed the only way of accounting for Sir Roke's dagger having been removed by Sherlock. He must have forgotten where he laid his own down, and picked up Sir Roke's, in his confusion, instead.

Again, by which door had the murderer entered the room of the deceased? Clewson swore distinctly that he heard the bolt which secured the door which opened on the dressing-room fall into its place while he was arranging the candle and some other things in the dressing-room. If this were so, access from the dressing-room was impossible. The murderer must have entered from the gallery, and afterward locked the door upon the inside, the murder having been committed at the time, as the blood-marks on the handle of the key attested. One thing was certain, that he had not made his egress through the same door. He must have raised the falling bolt, and let himself out through the dressing-room. Clewson, who was accustomed to be called up at all hours of the night by his master, slept very lightly; no one, he was confident, could pass through his room without waking him. Carmel Sherlock could not, he thought, have been many seconds in his room at the time when he first saw him.

And now the jurors trooped down the stairs again, silently ruminating, and having retired and considered their finding for some ten minutes, they returned with a verdict of willful murder, against Carmel Sherlock, against whom the coroner accordingly forthwith issued his warrant.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

ROGER TEMPLE SEES HIS LADY-LOVE.

When at length the house was cleared of these intruders, and left to the consciousness of late occurrences, and the gloom of death, Mark Shadwell, standing with Stour Temple and honest Roger in the hall, had hardly seen the last vehicle drive away, and disappear through the long perspective of towering trees, when, lifting his head, he said to the vicar—

"Did you hear and see that long-headed villain?" Mark looked fiercely on Stour Temple.

"Whom do you mean?" asked he, surprised at this abrupt appeal.

"Old Mervyn, of course—stingy as he is, I believe he'd give a hundred pounds to improve this occasion to aggravate the misfortune and blacken the gloom under which my house lies—*think* of the wretch! The whole day long,

but one idea in his head—to try and make people fancy that there were *two* murderers in this house! Whom could he mean to indicate? It could not be that fellow Clewson. There is no imaginable motive *there*, and *he's* a stranger—a mere sojourner—*that* would not disgrace me—whom *could* he be thinking of?"

"I'm quite clear," answered the vicar, "that he did not think of *any* one in particular. I don't think even he fancies any such thing *seriously*, himself. He threw it out simply as a possible hypothesis on which to account for some puzzling circumstances, which must have struck *you* also. If I, or Roger here, had mooted the same inquiry, you would not have suspected an unfair motive. It is, pardon me, my dear Mr. Shadwell, your own prejudice that reflects itself in mistaken imputations of his motives."

"Ha, Temple, you *won't* see!—that fellow goes to your church, and listens to your sermons, and gives you a few groats now and then out of his overgrown wealth to divide among your poor—so, of course, he's a saint! May God unmask and punish him!"

"Pray, my dear sir, do consider; only this moment, as I may say, descended from so awful a scene, and the presence of that mute and terrible witness of the vanity of earth and the victory of death," said the vicar, in the low tones of earnest expostulation; "I do assure you you wrong Mr. Mervyn. He may be no *friend* of yours; *you* make no secret of your feelings toward him; but I'm very certain he bears you no enmity."

"I'll *make* him speak out; he *shall* tell his meaning. I'm much obliged for his forbearance, but this is a limited household, and to set such an imputation afloat among them! Surely *you* see the malignity and cowardice of it as clearly as I do? But—no matter—the 'cat will mew, the dog will have his day;' it may be my turn yet. I saw his nephew a short time since—Charles Mordant—is he still with you?"

"Yes; on leave. We are all so fond of him. I don't know whether he is going to visit his uncle this year! I fancy he has more liberty with us and enjoys it more," answered the vicar.

"I dare say; I don't know much about him. Have you seen my wife to-day? I'm certain she'd like to talk to you a little. There's no good in my going; I'm as much put out by this odious business as she is, and I really don't know what to say to her. But you could—I have not seen her to-day, simply because I knew I should find her in distress, and should not know how to comfort her."

"Certainly, if you think she would wish it."

"Of course she would. I don't mean talking nothing but Bible; tell her the news, any thing to get up her spirits a little; I'll go up stairs, and introduce you. I hope those fellows," he continued in a low tone, as they went up stairs side by side, "will come at once and take away poor Roke. You can't imagine what it is, having the body here, with so many nervous women in the house; and to be in charge of such a thing—I *hate* it. And then, I'm every way quite upset; and how I'm to get on without Carmel Sherlock, God only knows. Here we are—I'm coming to see you, Amy, and I've brought a visitor with me; are you at home to us?"

"It is so good of you to come again to-day," she said to the vicar; "you must stay—*pray* don't go for a few minutes?"

He answered her little appeal and her beseeching look kindly, and Mark said—

"Having seen you, Amy, and asked you how you do, I take my leave; there are fifty things to be looked after, one more distressing than another—but it must be got through."

And dismally he turned and left the room.

"That dreadful inquest is quite over?" she said, in a very low tone, and looking at him as if she would have asked another question.

"Yes; and I think very satisfactorily—that is, so far as perfect distinctness is concerned. That poor, wretched man, you know," and the vicar shook his head, "*mad* man I must call him—they found that the act was *his*—as *we* all knew before—and so, except for *him*, it ends; and *he*, from all we can learn, appears to be unquestionably insane."

"That any one capable of this should have been living in this house, talking to us, passing us on the stairs, and smiling in our faces, seems so frightful; and that the crime should have happened in this quiet household—so near to one's doors, and by a hand we all so trusted—is like a dream—a frightful story in a book of horrors!"

"I am haunted by that kind of incredulity myself," said the vicar, with a little shrug. "I can fancy how men who are beginning to grow insane, and are frightened by their illusions, feel. It really is by an effort that I can fix the truth in my mind as a reality, and believe in it."

"And how did Mr. Shadwell go through that dreadful ordeal?"

"Oh, just as *we* did—very well."

"He is more sensitive than you would imagine; any thing that touches the honor of his house is agony to him. It was very kind of you to come; he is not on happy terms, you know, with his neighbors, and he might have imagined affronts intended, where none were thought of; and a word from you would set it all right; and—*was* there any thing unpleasant—did any thing occur?"

"No—nothing—there was just a word or two between him and old Mr. Mervyn?"

"Oh! Mr. Mervyn? What did *he* say?" asked she, nervously.

"Merely a few words, such as *I* might have said, or any other friend, but the spirit of which Mr. Shadwell mistook, *quite;* and, in fact, take it what way one might, there was absolutely nothing in it to cause the slightest pain."

"Tell me—*do* tell me—if there *was* any thing? I am sure you'll tell me."

"Nothing—really—just an impatient word from Mr. Shadwell, and a word of defense, or excuse, from Mr. Mervyn; but only that; and every thing went on quite smoothly; no hitch—nothing; and now—except, of course, the impression that remains upon one's nerves—your trouble, on this account, is quite over."

"God grant it!" said she, with a great sigh and a look of great anxiety.

"And now I must tell you how they are at home; and what is going on in the gay world round the vicarage."

And so the good man endeavored to lead away her thoughts from the occurrences that had so awfully occupied them.

The hall door was still open, and our friend, Roger Temple, stood in the hall alone, looking from that elevation down the avenue, with its wide grass borders and solemn perspective of gigantic trees.

His jerry was on his head, his dark grey "zephyr," as he called his outer garment, loosely encompassed his portly form, and with the ivory crook of his stick pressed upon his fat chin, he looked with an innocent melancholy upon the sombre prospect before him.

He had not, it must be allowed, much variety to amuse him; but, like more busy and bustling men, he had something to think of. That which from outward seeming we often assume to be the dominant idea, is not always present in our thoughts, any more than in our dreams. I do not think that honest Roger was absorbed wholly by the tragedy of Raby. There was another drama in which his interest was nearer and more active.

As his fancy painted its scenes, and listened to its dialogue, with an interest that took no account of the time that was flying while he stood there, and amid his dreams kept him continually on the alert for a sign or sound that might indicate the coming of that enchantress who wove these spells, and whose approach thrilled him, even at a distance, with an indescribable emotion, he looked about him, now and then, with a fat and simple sadness, and stood suspended, the handle of his cane removed from his expansive chin as he listened, and then sighed, and resumed his tender contemplation of nature.

On a sudden a door, in its deep oak frame, one of several that surrounded the paneled hall, opened. With an oblique glance, almost over his shoulder, this portly swain beheld it, turned, and with a sensation of delight and confusion, ready to sink into the earth in rapture, he saw his spirit.

In the shadow she stood. Did she ever before look so lovely, melancholy, beautiful? What clear and wonderful tints! Her rich, wavy hair, and deep, large eyes; and those delicately-formed lips, for which honest Roger could find no comparison but in the glow of the scarlet geranium petals in Barbara's garden, a discovery which, in a moment of romantic confidence, he had trusted, with a bashful sigh, to the ear of his sister—that admiring and sympathetic maiden—who assented thoughtfully and with energy, and then plucked a sprig of that flower, as they stood together in the sunset air, on the steps, and placed it in his button-hole; whence the enamored fellow disengaged it, and looked on it with a sigh and a smile, and kissed it with a gentle laugh and a blush, and replaced it, saying—

"Ah, Baby! if she thought of me as you do—but I think it is all a foolish dream."

And now, in the deep oak frame, behind a film of shadow, he saw his dream, and did not very well know for a moment or two what he said.

With eyes lowered, she stood before him, and said in a low tone, such as people murmur in a church porch as they go out—

"Oh! Mr. Temple, I'm so glad it is you; have they all gone away?"

"All except Stour—my brother, you know—he's up stairs, and I've been waiting here for him."

"Oh!—and is it quite over, Mr. Temple?"

"Yes, it *is* over, Miss Marlyn; I fear you have found it a very trying time—very agitating—you can't think how much I have pitied you all this time."

"Very kind, Mr. Temple. It has indeed been a very awful time. Would you mind—I've been so unspeakably anxious—telling me just what happened?"

"At the inquest?"

"Yes, if you will; perhaps you'd come into this room for a moment—and I can listen."

She stepped in—a melancholy, rather dark room—the school-room, with a shelf, and some lesson-books, and two dingy globes, and a very old piano, to indicate its old character; one tall window—never sufficient to make it cheerful—was darkened by three or four elms, standing very near, in a clump, which threw their gloom upon it.

"The door is open so that you can hear when your brother is leaving," said the young lady, standing by the old grand piano, leaning on it with her slender hand. "You will kindly tell me what passed?"

"Only too happy—every thing—as well as I can recollect it," said he, and he looked at her, and sighed, and then, in a very tender voice, he told the story of the inquest. He told it carefully. It happened that it had interested him intensely, and he remembered every thing, and knew the people. Before he had got very far she asked him—

"Mr. Shadwell was present, wasn't he?"

"Oh dear, yes. You see, you are so innocent of the ways of—of the world, I may say," he murmured, tenderly, "you don't know about these things; but he was a *witness*."

And so he went on with his detailed narrative, now and then sighing, and looking at that enigmatical young lady who was listening, as they say, with all her ears, while her slow glance darkly traveled over the floor.

When Roger came to the little altercation that had interrupted the quietude of the proceedings, she looked at him with a very odd expression. He saw it for a moment. It almost startled honest Roger, as unexpectedly turning his eyes upon her, he met the glance. For so incontestable an angel, was it not the strangest look he could have imagined?

"A snake's small eye blinks dull and shy,
And the lady's eyes shrunk in her head,
Each shrunk up to a serpent's eye,
And with somewhat of malice and more of dread
She looked askance."

Honest Roger had no turn for analyzing phenomena or sensations; he simply saw that which dismayed him—felt there was something wrong—and stopped short, a little bewildered.

With electric speed Miss Marlyn saw in his honest face the shock which her look had given him; and that look had disappeared, and Miss Marlyn was looking down, softly and sadly, as before.

"Why do you stop?" she said, looking up sadly.

"I forgot, I think, what I was saying, for a moment; and I was afraid, perhaps, that the

account of all this horrid business might have frightened you. Did it?"

"Frighten me! how could it? If there were any thing new to hear, indeed; but, you know, we had heard it all—all about poor, miserable Mr. Sherlock, who is mad, isn't he? and every thing about that frightful occurrence; and—and who is Mr. Mervyn?"

"He is an old gentleman, with a very good estate. My brother likes him, and thinks him a useful man. I don't know much of him. But you must have seen him at church two or three times, since you came here, though he usually goes to Maxton—a tall man, with a very white head."

"And—I don't quite understand what he meant—do you?"

"Mr. Shadwell thought he meant that two people might have been engaged in the murder."

"Oh? That is a very unpleasant idea; it makes one feel so unsafe. What do *you* think? what does the vicar say?"

"Oh, he does not think it—*no* one does—Mr. Mervyn doesn't, I'm sure; he seemed to have quite given up that idea before the inquiry ended. I should be sorry you were alarmed."

"But I'm not a fool, by any means; and I should be very much vexed if you concealed the real state of the case through fear of frightening me. I hope you don't think me a coward, Mr. Temple, or a fool; I should be vexed at your thinking so meanly of me."

"But I don't—I couldn't; I wish you knew how I really think of you—*half* what I—I—"

"Then—oh, Mr. Temple, don't deceive me! —do tell me, I *entreat*, what is really thought about it."

"Nothing more, I assure you, than that Carmel Sherlock was the assassin—in fact, there is no second opinion about it; and I am so delighted that *I* happened to be the person to relieve your mind of any apprehension that any dangerous person might be still in your neighborhood."

"That is so kind of you!"

"I wish—I only wish—I wish ever so much—" said Roger, growing very hot, and tender, and hurried, and making a faint attempt to approach his short fat hand to her taper fingers.

"Yes, you have been always very kind—and very kind taking the trouble of telling me all this; and do, pray, tell me all the rest—you tell it *so* interestingly."

Thus encouraged, he went on with his narrative. He saw no more that wicked, shrinking face that, for a moment, had scared him—only the beauty that he was so tenderly enamored of.

She listened, looking down, with a sharp and close attention, now and then fiddling nervously with a little black cross she wore; and at the end she said—

"I'm so much obliged. One grows nervous and excited so near to so horrible a scene; sure of nothing—fancying every thing. I was always accounted brave at school, and I'm sure I'm no coward—that is, in the foolish sense; but still, every one has imagination—even you men feel its power sometimes, and can pity us whose nature it is to look up in danger, and in trouble, to your strength, and counsel, and compassion. I have two friends here, Mr. Temple," she continued, a little incoherently, "two only—my pupil and companion, Rachel, and my dear Mrs. Shadwell—*they* are so good—otherwise I have none; and Madame de la Perriere—cruel to me when I was a little thing, a child, at her school, is my persecutrix still. I have discovered lately a cruelty of hers; and I can not, as my dear Mrs. Shadwell advises, quite despise it. No, no! it is not for me that happy talent of contempt; falsehood and insult I can defy, for I am brave, but my heart is bleeding all the time. I think I shall leave Raby very soon. Perhaps, on earth, is some place where a poor and very unhappy girl may toil and live in safety. There are some kind faces I shall miss, and long remember—perhaps *always*."

"But—but—you're *not* going—you *can't* be *thinking* of going; what should they *do*—what should *every one* do?"

He had taken her hand, in a tremulous agitation; and, at the same time, the vicar's step and voice were heard on the stairs, talking to some one as he approached.

Miss Marlyn withdrew her hand suddenly.

"I've been speaking very foolishly—I have forgotten myself; pray, Mr. Temple, forgive me. Go, pray go—farewell, Mr. Temple; and a thousand very grateful thanks."

She stepped to the door, and held it open, so that honest Roger, who was lingering still in a happy confusion, could not fail to understand that he was dismissed.

"Farewell, dear Miss Marlyn, but only for a day or two," said he, with a great sigh, and a look of prodigious tenderness.

"Do—do go, pray," whispered the young lady, a little peremptorily; and hearing his brother very near, with one longing, lingering look over his fat shoulder, he passed the threshold, and was established in the centre of the hall, and looking quite innocently, by the time the vicar stepped into its paneled and sombre area.

CHAPTER XLIX.

A DISTINGUISHED VISITOR LEAVES RABY.

Next day Mr. Pepys Adderly arrived. The master of Raby received him in his study, and saw a man of some five-and-forty years, with the easy air of fashion, and a kind of languor and puffiness that suggested the idea of self-indulgence, and what is called good living.

He was, of course, properly concerned about poor dear Wycherly, because, in fact, he did not quite see, now that his patron was going to that formal and protracted supper, after the manner of Polonius, where the chief guest is not active but passive, how he—Pepys Adderly—was any longer to fare sumptuously every day; and, in fact, unless the baronet had done something for him in his will—a not very likely thoughtfulness, even if there *was* a will, which Adderly could not make out, and Sir Roke's men of business in London had not heard of—he might, before a year had passed, be very much puzzled to make out a dinner of any kind.

The vicar had come over to Raby, at Shadwell's request, to be present while inquisition was made for a will, in Sir Roke's room.

Mark Shadwell had placed seals upon the de-

ceased baronet's desk, dressing-case, dispatch-box, and every other possible depository of such a document which his room contained.

Mr. Pepys Adderly gave all the assistance in his power in this search; but it was totally unrewarded. There were not even letters. It was Sir Roke's habit, except when there was some very special necessity for preserving them, to destroy his letters on answering them.

Those which turned up were upon business—accounts, memoranda of investments, an invoice of some pictures, bronze, and statuary—not a letter among them all but such as related strictly to business. Mark was relieved of an oppressive suspense when the search concluded without discovering one scrap of paper bearing the well-known handwriting of his secretary.

"And now," said Mark, who was looking very ill, so soon as they were again in his library, "what steps do you propose taking about the body? Where is it to be taken to?"

"Drayton, who is to succeed him, you know, would be the natural person, but he's yachting—in the Mediterranean—Lord knows where, and there's no one to direct. We don't know whether there's a will, and there's no one with authority."

"Well, you know, something *must* be done, and you and his solicitors can act—*I* won't," said Mark, harshly.

"There may be directions—where he's to be buried, and all *that*; it had better be quite private, I suppose?" said Pepys Adderly, patting the leg of his trousers with his walking-cane, and looking inquiringly at Mark, who merely nodded. "And where he's laid for the *present*, poor fellow! isn't of much importance, I should think. They'll be removing him, I conjecture, to some place, don't you think?"

"I can't tell any more than you," said Shadwell.

"No, quite uncertain; and I'm told there's an old family burial-ground where some of his people, long ago, were buried—a place near this called *Wynderfel*, isn't it? and it struck me it might lie there, as it were, provisionally—until—eh?"

"*No*," said Mark, peremptorily.

"Oh!—I merely mentioned it; but you think it wouldn't do?"

"No. You don't know, but it has been shut up as a burial-place for ever so long, and it isn't to be thought of. The remains must be conveyed from this, and they can lie, as you say, provisionally wherever you, or those people who have been acting for him, think best."

"There are cemeteries near to you?" suggested Mr. Adderly.

"I dare say. You can have no difficulty. I decline taking any part in those arrangements, however. You'll be good enough to arrange with Clewson, his servant, and about the things he has got in his room."

"Yes—yes—certainly; and there will be people here to-morrow—about the arrangements—undertaker-people, you know. I suppose they can get in when they arrive?"

"Certainly," said Mark. "I only wish I could offer you a bed here; but we are all in such confusion in consequence of this miserable occurrence, and you will be much more comfortable down at Raby."

Pepys Adderly, I dare say, mentally acquiesced in this conclusion. At the best, however, it was a dismal bore, and I think he would have had no hesitation in cutting his dead patron in this extremity if it had not been for some hopes of founding relations with young Drayton upon the melancholy duties he was now performing.

Mr. Adderly had no difficulty in presenting a very becoming melancholy upon this funeral occasion to the people of Raby; for, as we know, "nothing dies, but something mourns," and here in this out-of-the-way part of the world, Pepys Adderly's soft raiment and sumptuous fare had been suddenly abolished by a madman. The claret, hock, and Madeira of his serene perspective had been smashed. The haunch of venison he loved had been pitched into Tartarus by Carmel Sherlock—that most selfish of murderers. Mr. Adderly devoutly hoped he would be caught, and grudged him so quick and easy an exit as that through the drop. But his practical ruminations were chiefly concerned with the rising star. He knew little of Drayton—less he now felt than, considering his past opportunities, was at all justifiable. His passion for yachting he could make nothing of. Adderly could not abide that recreation. To him it was simply being in a floating hospital, and he knew nothing about luffing and larboard, and all their horrid lingo. He had nothing for it, then, but to be sharp about these funeral expenses; to take on himself to discharge all the servants who would go at his bidding; to see that the cellar-books were all right, and to get up exact inventories of every thing, and constitute himself the conscientious guardian and incorruptible agent of the unconscious heir, and be mastering detail, and cultivating a Spartan frugality during his absence, to lay the best foundation he could for a continuance, under the new *régime*, of his privileges and his office.

The next day came, and something was smuggled into the house, and people treading softly and speaking low were busy in Sir Roke's room.

When next Mr. Clewson saw his old master his dress was changed to white, and a border of white was round his face, and he was extended in a deep coffin lined with white quilted satin—robed, and fringed, and cased in the emblematic purity of white.

Mr. Clewson looked down on the familiar face of the baronet—more sharp, more sunken, more earthy it had grown—a little streak of the sightless eye showed white in the shadow. Mr. Clewson saw the lines about the nostril and mouth that used to express themselves so dangerously when he snarled and cursed at him pretty regularly every night and morning. He had often made the phlegmatic Clewson intensely angry, and driven him to the verge of his self-command; but, on the whole, Mr. Clewson had been very sufficiently afraid of him.

Now Mr. Clewson was looking upon that mechanism, the spring of which was taken away, with a stolid but decent curiosity. He had now decidedly the advantage of that great gentleman whom he had feared, and a good deal hated, and in some sort admired. Mr. Clewson could see, and hear, and stand, and, after his fashion, think. A latent sense of the value of life com-

municated, as he looked on this odd image, a serene self-satisfaction and a tranquil glow.

As he looked on the mask that lay in the shadow of the coffin, a good many indistinct thoughts and feelings were also moving to and fro within the not very refined or active mind of Mr. Clewson, whose parents had been religious people, and left their son some shadowy ideas of hell, which occasionally came into view like things traced in sympathetic ink, which show themselves only in certain temperatures.

"That's a really *beautiful* suit, it is!" said the soft diapason of Mr. Clothey, the eminent undertaker, as he gently brushed away some dust from the edge of the coffin with his handkerchief. "*You* never saw nothink of the kind more tasteful nor luxurious nowhere. That sat'n, sir, has stood us in fifteen four the yard, and heider-down stuffin' and pillow. The style is the same which the hobsequeies of the late Marquis of—. You've 'eard of that, no doubt, sir. We had that, you've 'eard—very beautiful thing it was. If he was the Dook of Wellington he couldn't 'ave been got up more tasteful—the whole world 'eard of that, sir; we were in the papers, and spoke very high of indeed, and there wasn't no other 'ouse in England could 'ave turned him out with the same finish and hellegance. This 'ere is one of the sweetest bits of cedar you hever seed, and this un's lead." He scratched it a little with the nail with which he indicated the successive rinds, as it were, in which the kernel of Sir Roke was enclosed. "Then the meogny—the shell being hoak—we've turned out nothink prettier, and the family has reason to be gratified, which I say, is our *principle;* we never put in nothink but the very best of every think, and spares nothink to give satisfaction."

"It's 'ansome, sir, very," acquiesced Clewson, solemnly.

"*Ansome!*—Why, there's not a dook but might be proud to lie in that, sir."

And so forth did they converse.

Two of Mr. Clothey's gentlemen remained at the inn at Raby, awaiting the orders of Mr. Pepys Adderly next morning. One of these gentlemen drank tea that evening obligingly with the servants at Raby, the other being entertained by old Mrs. Wyndle with the same beverage in the housekeeper's room, and with a great collection of anecdotes of the late Sir Roke Wycherly's boyhood, and two of the servants came over from the vicarage, and several neighbors also, who were brought up quietly by the back-stairs, and had a peep at the handsome upholstery provided by the tasteful house of Clothey & Clamp, and also at the forlorn baronet simpering fixedly through the thick satin and eider-down in which he reposed.

The next morning Sir Roke was gone. He set out in the grey of the dawn for the railway station, more than ten miles away. He was to make the journey up to London, attended by Clewson, who was in charge of the luggage, and under the special care of the two gentlemen from Messrs. Clothey & Clamp, at whose establishment he was to pass the night on trestles, and thence in the morning to proceed to his destination in the dry and quiet vault where his grandfather and some contemporary kinsmen have been awaiting him for fifty years.

Sir Roke being gone, and Mr Clewson gone, the obliteration proceeds. Beds and bedding are removed, bedsteads are taken down and transported to other places. The curtains unhung, the carpets dragged off the floor. That one with the great black stain upon it goes I know not where, but the stain has gone through, and dyes the floor itself in a wide black blotch with a map-like outline, which will not wash out. Three different days has the charwoman been at work upon it with hot water, and sand, and soap; but when the floor dries the stain comes forth to witness, and won't be put away or got rid of. And now these rooms are locked up. Mrs. Wyndle has the keys, and I suppose in the course of time they will be haunted.

No news of Carmel Sherlock. A reward for his apprehension had been offered. The newspapers reprinted the description of his person; the police were vigilant, the telegraph transmitted scraps of information, and sent people on vain quests. Twice already had wrong persons been arrested on suspicion, examined, remanded, and discharged.

The winter was already heralding its march with gusts and storms, that roared through the tossing boughs of the forest, and began to strip the yellow leaves from their holdings, and scatter them over the sward. More wild and sombre grew the scene. Sometimes came a still and sunny day—a saddened remembrance of summer throwing a melancholy lustre over the thinning and discolored foliage.

The chilled air, and red sunsets, and shortened days betokening the decline of autumn, seemed to deepen the gloom of Mark Shadwell. More than three weeks had passed since the inquest, and still nothing was heard of Carmel Sherlock.

He had taken no step to secure a successor. He was making no exertion to supply by his own diligence the loss of his strange, but, on the whole, efficient steward. He was much more silent than ever, and looking ill.

When his newspapers came, he used to take them into the recess of one of the windows, and there con them over—every column—every paragraph; and after he had made his search, he would call to his daughter, if she happened to be in the room, and say—

"Look through it carefully, child, and try if you can find a line—anywhere—about Carmel Sherlock;" and when there was nothing, I think he seemed better pleased and more at his ease for the rest of the day.

In one of those red sunsets, wild and stormy, that have a character at once sad and threatening, Shadwell stood at the window, looking along the undulating plain studded with noble timber, and shut in on the left by the wooded uplands, toward Wynderfel, hidden by an intervening undulation, but showing in the red west the tufted tops of the old trees that stand among its ruins. He had been making his fruitless search as usual, in the newspaper which had just reached him—among reports, and facetiæ, and notices, and the other lumber that impeded him—for the missing and concealed Carmel Sherlock, and having failed, handed it to his daughter with the words—

"Run your eye carefully over this, and see if you can find any thing about Sherlock."

He had almost forgotten that she was in the

room, when Rachel said: "Oh! here's something!"

Shadwell turned sharply. "What is it? *Read* it."

And she read:

"PLYMOUTH POLICE.—A man answering the description of the villain Carmel Sherlock was arrested at Plymouth yesterday, on board the William Ford, bound for New York. As the vessel was only waiting for the tide to weigh anchor, the arrest was made necessarily with great promptitude. On being brought before Mr. Truefit, the magistrate, his worship asked him—"

"Look on, *do*, and find—*was* it Sherlock? Here—*here*, child, give me the paper."

He spoke so harshly, and looked so pale and angry, that the girl was startled, and, as he snatched it from her hand, her eyes filled with tears.

"*Where?*" he said, with an impatient stamp. She pointed to the place.

He, as we say, devoured the news, and in a few seconds more, with a kind of sneer, exclaimed, pitching the paper aside: "Such rot!"

"It wasn't *he?*" she inquired.

"No; another blunder. I hope the fellow will bring his action, if he lost his passage: those fellows should be taught their business. This is the third time, by —, they have pulled up a wrong person."

Though he spoke bitterly and with vehemence, there seemed a sort of satisfaction too in his air. Was there a lingering regard for Carmel Sherlock, which excited a concealed sympathy with his stratagems, and exalted in his escape?

Mark Shadwell continued in silence to look toward the distant prospect, to which the red fantastic clouds of an autumn sunset formed a background. His thoughts were no doubt running in the same channel, for he repeated the name of Carmel Sherlock once or twice to himself, and then he said in a low tone—

"Wynderfel—*that* was his favorite haunt;" and he looked vacantly at his daughter.

"I should not be surprised if he were to come here," said Rachel. Perhaps she would not have spoken had he not looked at her so steadfastly, that she grew nervous, and felt constrained to say something.

"Who?" he asked suddenly.

"I meant Carmel Sherlock," she answered, half-frightened at her own audacity in speaking on a subject which seemed so to disturb her father, of whom she stood so much in awe.

"You talk like a fool," said he, and looked again from the window.

She was in hopes that the dialogue had ended with that sharp speech, but she was deceived; suddenly he asked her—

"What makes you fancy that—who said it?" and he looked at her with eyes angry and earnest.

"The last time I saw him—the evening before—"

"I know—before he left; go on!"

"He took a kind of leave of me, as I sat in the window, and he talked as if he had a wonderful love for this place."

"Wonderful, indeed!" sneered Shadwell, dismally.

"And he spoke of a return, as if he would revisit it after death."

"Ho? That he may safely do."

"But it left an idea in my mind—I have been thinking ever since—that he would feel something like that homesickness that the Swiss are said to feel, and would be sure to return."

"I see; you are a very romantic young lady. Men, however, with constables and the hue-and-cry in pursuit of them, don't run into the lion's mouth in search of the picturesque. Sherlock is mad, I dare say; but he has the shrewdness of a madman. Come back *here*, indeed!" he muttered, still with a sneer, and an impatient shrug.

And Mark Shadwell turned from the window, and walked moodily to the fire-place, where he leaned with his arm on the chimney-piece, in deep and troubled thought, as it seemed; and once or twice again he looked at her in dark meditation, and she fancied he was about to question her farther, but he turned instead and left the room gloomily.

CHATPER L.

A STRANGE MEETING.

THAT night, with a message from her mother, Rachel timidly entered the library, and found Mark Shadwell at an open cabinet. He turned suddenly toward her, and she saw that he had a pistol in his hand. He looked angry and embarrassed, but said only, with an odd smile on his pale face—

"You see, I've been thinking of what you said, and am looking up my pistols; prudent, eh?"

There was, I suppose, something between fear and perplexity in her countenance, for he added—

"You need not be afraid; they're not loaded. Don't you know what I mean? Suppose Sherlock *should* come back here, as you said—quite mad, and want to murder *me?* Don't be afraid, I tell you; I don't believe any thing of the sort. But people are sometimes made nervous by dreams; and *your* dream about Sherlock—for such it is—has made me a little bit fidgety—contrary to reason, contrary to belief; but this miserable month has unstrung me, and I'm growing like an old woman or a child."

And so saying, he fell into a dreary little laugh, and locking the pistol up again, resumed that sterner gravity that had grown habitual with him, and heard her message and answered it.

Mark Shadwell, alone in his library, was not reading, nor writing. He was darkly dreaming away his hours in vague schemes of change and self-banishment. A Canadian farm—a flock in Australia—a clearing in the back settlements. To sell Raby and the Wynderfel estates to some rich clothier, and thus scuttle the vessel that had been so long laboring and foundering in hopeless stress of weather, and let the rolling ocean of oblivion roar darkly over the old name of the Shadwells of Wynderfel. Such was the staple of those vague thoughts which were always rising and revolving over the cauldron of his divination.

How was even his present painful position to be maintained? The huge, creaking, decayed machine—worked with a perpetual strain and increasing difficulty—had just sufficed to keep the deck of the used-up vessel above water; and

who was to work it now that its engineer, Carmel Sherlock, whose screws, and hammer and oil were needed every hour to prevent its coming to pieces, was gone?

Yes, there was one clever person—diligent, too, when diligence was needed—who might do much, but of course not all, to stay the threatened ruin: his secretary. But she was not to be thought of. Under sentence; with just a reprieve until more urgent distractions were allayed; and then, she, like Carmel Sherlock, should depart into darkness. Still he put it off, and off. And though his wounded vanity was sometimes stung almost to the pitch of hatred, and his arm lifted to strike, the blow was deferred and the sacrifice lived on.

This, night at the corner of the great gallery, unexpectedly, Mark Shadwell met Miss Marlyn. They had each their candles in their hands, and met face to face, with only two or three steps between.

Their eyes encountered for less than a moment, and Miss Marlyn's were lowered to the ground. Mark's gaze was fixed uncertainly upon her. His thoughts had been elsewhere. In such surprises a quarrel slips sometimes from the mind, like a loose page from a book; and it requires an effort to recover the parenthesis. Mark did, in time to save him from the familiar sentence that was on his lips. He remembered all on a sudden the awful distance that was between them. Silently he drew a little aside to let her pass, and as silently, with eyes still lowered, but looking not abashed, but sad and proud—yes, very proud—she glided by and disappeared. Mark Shadwell felt oddly—a little chill, a regret, a pang; but with a scornful smile and a frown on his pale face, he turned and pursued his way.

He had not seen her; no, not since that dreadful night, which made the old house ghastly. No, not once. He had lived so entirely to himself, and his walks had been so remote.

He had forgotten how very beautiful she was, or rather how that beauty always impressed him. He shut his door sullenly, and as he set his candle down upon the table, he thought—

"So much beauty is *funeste* and ominous. It never was granted to the heroine of a common or a happy story. To me to look at her is pain. Ever again to suffer that d—d delusion to steal into my heart is impossible. That is the kind of person whom it is impossible not to love, or not to hate. Indifference is not imaginable. Well for me she chose to make me hate her. Yes, I shall settle that matter. She shall go. Let her play out the tragedy or burlesque which fate allots her in another theatre. Raby has seen the first act. My God! If she had never entered these doors he would not have come."

Mark Shadwell left the house next day alone at about noon. There are agitations of mind for which instinct seems to prescribe bodily labor and extreme fatigue. Mark walked rapidly. He chose the upland forest for his march. Its brakes, its steeps, and rocks enforced exertion, and its vast seclusion secured him against interruption.

The sun was near the horizon when, by a circuitous and lonely route, Mark found himself at last before the ruined walls and roofless gables of Wynderfel.

The level light glittered on grass and nettles, touching the ivy on the walls with a tremulous splendor, and flooding the old grey walls and nodding trees, now stripped of half their foliage, with a sad and mellow glory that deepened by contrast the cold grey shadows that stretched far over the slopes.

Not two months had passed since he had sat on the same stone bench, looking on the same lonely picture of by-gone greatness and earthly mutability, under the same sunset glow and shadow, and he was no longer the same Mark Shadwell. He looked years older, and turned toward these ruins a thinner, paler, sterner face.

Rapid walking is not conducive to thought. In fact, it is next to impossible while walking quickly to think in train at all. One reason, no doubt, why nature points to that expedient for relief in high mental excitement.

Now Mark's walk was over for awhile; he was sitting on the old stone bench, looking upon the low-arched door-ways, the mullioned windows, and those tall chimneys of Wynderfel, up which the ivy tendrils were creeping.

Quietude had hardly succeeded to his long and rapid walk when the image of that strangely beautiful girl, as she stood for a moment before him like a lovely statue of shame and pride, suddenly, in the lonely gallery of Raby, rose before his memory, and furnished the theme of a long, passionate and bitter meditation.

She haunted him, and yet he hated her—hated her for having used and deceived him. Was ever man so fooled and mortified? And yet there was that beautiful image, the fascination of which at times overpowered his vindictive rage. Wounded pride and passion mingling resulted in that malignant idolatry which we know as jealousy. Hardly conscious of the passions that entered into his agitation, he was, literally, wildly jealous. Jealous of whom? Of that blood-stained, cold, smirking shadow whom he hated to think of. Yes, a profitable conspiracy! Let them keep their tryst. If Carmel Sherlock were him, *he* would say, "Let her go to him, or let him come for her." A sort of shudder stole over him with this mockery, and at the same moment, like an apparition summoned by his evil thoughts, Carmel Sherlock stepped through the arched door-way of the ruin, and stood before him.

Travel-soiled, wild, famine-stricken he looked, and extended his emaciated fingers, and directed his woe-begone eyes toward Mark Shadwell.

As a spirit rises, Mark Shadwell was standing, he knew not how, and freezing with a horror he had never known before.

"My good God!" repeated Mark, slowly, twice or thrice, in a tone scarcely above a whisper, gazing with wild eyes, and fixed as if he were cut out of stone.

Carmel Sherlock was equally motionless, and stood still with a countenance indescribably wild and piteous; his lean hand extended toward him palm upward, like a mendicant's. With a sudden gasp, Mark Shadwell stamped upon the ground, and cried:

"Murderer! Miscreant!"

And at the same moment, with a step back, he lifted his hand from his pocket and discharged a pistol full at Carmel Sherlock. The explo-

sion rang sharply among the echoing walls, and startled into a general flutter the sparrows in the ivy.

Carmel Sherlock staggered a step or two, and his arm dragged by his side.

Before the film of smoke projected from the pistol had ceased rolling in the air, almost simultaneously with the report, a cheery voice close by shouted, and steps were heard approaching on the narrow old road, which, just when it winds by the angle of the building, shows its pavement above the grass. It was plain from the tone that whoever cheered had no notion of the deadly intention with which the shot had been discharged.

Mark's hand was already in his pocket, on another pistol. But he did not raise it. The challenge that had just reached his ear arrested him. If he had seen the spectre of his murdered guest, he could not have looked more horror-stricken than he did as he scowled on Carmel.

Sherlock's face winced with pain; with his left hand he caught the angle of the door-way, and a cold moisture shone over his forehead.

"*Do*, through the *head*—and let me *die*," said Carmel Sherlock, faintly. "I came, sir, for *that*, to be taken, to die—any thing to *end* it."

"Hallo!" cried Roger Temple, now within a step or two of Mark Shadwell, and amazed, as well he might, and of course quite out of breath.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Charles Mordant, his companion, equally astonished.

"Glad you came up," said Shadwell, with white lips, and an attempt to laugh. "Rather a surprise, isn't it? *Here* he is—*Sherlock*. I don't believe a word he says."

With this false and agitated smile he glanced from them to Sherlock, and from Sherlock to them again, and the smile quickly subsided, and darkened into a scowl.

"What do you wish, Mr. Shadwell? Shall we take him?" said Charles Mordant, who had advanced within a step of Carmel Sherlock.

"The d—d fool!" said Shadwell between his teeth.

"Yes, take me, shoot me; the grave is best. I traveled, sir, Mr. Temple, seven-and-thirty miles on foot since last night for this, and I came to Wynderfel to see it once more. I'll go with you, Mr. Mordant, Mr. Temple, wherever my master says."

"You shall come up to the house, then, and from thence to Towton Bridge, and as you seek justice, you'll find it there," said Mark, savagely.

"Have we a right to take him without a warrant?" whispered honest Roger at Mark Shadwell's ear.

Shadwell made no answer. He merely said, "In a moment," looking still at Carmel Sherlock.

But Charles Mordant, who had not heard Roger's question, seized the wounded man by the collar.

Carmel started.

"Take your hand from my throat. Remove your hand, sir," said he, sternly, but with a trembling lip.

"Don't mind," said Shadwell, addressing Mordant.

"No, time enough when I get to the jail for *that*. I give myself up. No one takes me. I've come for the purpose; but you shan't drag or throttle me—let me die; but no profanation."

"Well, then, come to the house, your hurt must be attended to. I'm sorry, *very* sorry, but I could not help it. I thought you had something in your hand when you raised it. I wish I had known your real purpose," said Mark Shadwell, anxious, no doubt, that all should understand how he came to wound Carmel Sherlock. "Do you think you can walk so far?"

"In the arm," said Carmel, "I don't feel it now—it is not much—nothing, in fact." He looked pale, and spoke faintly, however.

"I'll fetch some water from the brook, shall I?" said Charles Mordant, and ran off, returning quickly with his flask filled.

"No," said Carmel Sherlock, "the bone is not broken—nothing. I wish it were through my brain, sir."

In a short time after this, the party, consisting of Mark Shadwell, Roger Temple, Charles Mordant and Carmel Sherlock, supporting his bleeding arm, entered the hall door of Raby.

CHAPTER LI.

MARK SHADWELL'S OFFER.

There were few words spoken till this odd party reached the house. Carmel Sherlock walked among them with the dejection of a man going to execution. When he came to the door he looked up and about him, and entered the large hall with a great sigh.

Old Robson, the butler and factotum of the family,—who knew something about horses, a little of tailoring, and loved flowers and singing-birds, and, also, having seen service as an officer's servant at Quatrebras and Waterloo, pretended to surgery,—was, with this accomplishment, now put in requisition. He happened to be in the hall as they entered. His short white hair seemed to bristle up over his purple face, and his little eyes almost to start from their sockets, as he stared on Carmel Sherlock.

"Hey?—*Dear* me!" he ejaculated. "Mr. *Sher*lock?"

"Ay, Mr Robson, the moth returns to the candle. You did not think to see *me*, sir?" said he, very pale and excited. "Shake hands! That was blood well spilt, sir—a devil cast out—Sir Roke Wycherly, body and soul!"

Robson, the fat old butler, with a shrewd, frightened face drew back without touching the hand he tendered, and Roger Temple answered, emphatically, with mild reproof—

"*There*, Mr. Sherlock, *pray*, don't. You *mustn't* talk that way, and you may *injure* yourself besides."

"He has been wounded," said Mark, sharply. "Don't mind his talking, but look to his arm; do you *hear*, Robson? and dress it if you think you can. You're faint, Sherlock—you must take something. Give him a glass of wine first, and then see about his arm," said Mark. He touched Temple on the arm, and said in his ear: "You'll kindly stay with him, won't you, for a few minutes? I must make out his committal, —but I shan't detain you long."

And with these words he entered the library,

leaving Carmel Sherlock seated in the hall with three people about him, and quickly in the surgical hands of old Robson.

When Mark Shadwell got into his library and shut the door, he felt suddenly faint and overcome. He bolted it and opened a window, standing before it for a time. He took from a drawer a printed form of committal to the jailer of Applebury jail. But his hand was tremulous. He did not want criticism, and this odd scrawl did not look like his signature. He tore it up, and threw it into the grate, and looked sadly on the extended hand in which was this treacherous tremor. He must wait a little, and let it subside.

Shadwell went out again to the hall. It was empty; but he heard voices from the room at the other side. There he found Carmel Sherlock, with his coat and waistcoat off. He was leaning with his shoulder to the wall, and looking down with a dark apathy upon the floor at his feet—the only man present, you would have said, quite unconcerned in the discussion of his wound. That wound, as it turned out, was trifling. The ball had passed between his left arm and his breast, leaving an abrasion, but no more. Two inches to the right would have directed it through his heart, and ended some of his speculations in certainty.

"I'm very glad — I'm very much relieved. I'm certain, now, he could not have meant me any harm. If I had only had time, Sherlock, to think, I should have *known* it. Had you not better sit down?"

Carmel Sherlock looked up at Shadwell, and his large eyes rested on his face with a melancholy stare. At this look of reproach, Mark Shadwell's eyes contracted and dropped to the ground.

"Ah, sir, even for a moment that such a thought should have crossed my benefactor's mind, *dishonors* me," said Carmel Sherlock.

"It was not a *thought*, Sherlock, it was a craze."

"A craze!" echoed Sherlock. "It is hard to pick your steps among unrealities and substances —*umbrâ pro corpore*. This house of Raby, sir, is full of false lights and false shadows; there is no true life possible in it."

"It was an impulse—not even a craze," said Mark Shadwell, with a strange eagerness. "If I had hurt you seriously, I should never have forgiven myself."

Sherlock sighed deeply.

"It is nothing, sir—I said so."

"No, thank God!" said Mark.

"I should have liked, sir, to fall by a friendly hand—by an accident. Where are my things?" he added, turning hastily, and getting on his coat and waistcoat. "I'm ready to go — I'm ready to go, sir. It is not the place, but the *way*, I hate. Those who like death don't like dying."

"Poor fellow!" whispered Roger Temple, shaking his head with a significant glance at Mark Shadwell.

"Yes," said Mark, with a nod, and beckoned Roger Temple into the hall. "You heard him talk—isn't it strange?" said Mark, looking darkly into Roger's honest eyes.

Roger lifted his hands, and shrugged his fat shoulders, saying:

"Poor fellow! isn't it horrid? It accounts for every thing, I think, almost—doesn't it?"

Mark nodded, and said:

"I've known that a long time. He has no idea of deceiving; but, at the same time, you can't believe a single word he says—half the things he relates are the merest fancies; and, no doubt, one of these delusions has been the cause of this crime—apparently so motiveless, and certainly so unlike *him*."

"*If* he's mad?" began Roger.

"Can we doubt it?" suggested Mark.

"And I do trust, in the mercy of heaven, that he is quite mad. They can't think of hanging him," said Roger.

"We English like hanging people — sane men, if we can get them—madmen, if we can't. It's clear, however, they *oughtn't* to hang that wretched maniac."

"It was a horrible freak. What do you suppose was in his mind?"

"Some lunacy—an idea of a duty, or a mission—heaven knows what."

"Poor, wretched fellow! Certainly he does look miserable," said Roger, pathetically · "and by the bye, how are we to get him to Applebury?"

"Well, I've been thinking, and I fancy the best plan is to swear in some of my men as special constables, and let them go there in Wason's 'bus from the town here."

"You know you must not hesitate if you have not got messengers enough. I can go at a devil of a pace when I like it," said my fat friend Roger; "and I'll run down, if you wish it, to Raby about the 'bus, and — and I hope this occurrence to-day has not alarmed your young ladies," he added, lowering his voice tenderly.

"I'm sure I can't tell," said Mark, dryly; "but I'm very much obliged for your offer. I don't know how I should have managed if you had not turned up. I think I'll talk a bit to that strange fellow—quietly by ourselves—he and I, and try and make out what fancy was in his brain when he did it."

"But you can't mean to be alone with him —he's not handcuffed or secured in any way; and, upon my honor, I think he looks quite mad!"

"I'm not afraid. I can take care of myself. He'll talk to me by ourselves; with others by I could get nothing from him."

Thus talking, they returned to the room where Sherlock and his two custodians were.

Mark dispatched the servant for three men who were within call; and signing to Roger Temple and young Mordaunt, they, with some misgivings, left the room together, keeping, however, within easy hearing of any alarm.

"Carmel," said he, so soon as he had shut the door of this rather dark wainscoted room, "a pretty mess you have made of it! What devil possessed you to run yourself into this frightful fix?"

"I'm guilty," said Sherlock, with his hands clasped together, looking down with a scowl of agony.

"Of course you are guilty," said Mark.

"That is," continued Sherlock, "if guilt there be in seeking the life of a monster predestinated by infallible powers to a bloody death."

"Well, I shan't debate the question, call it how we may; that has passed which exposes you to death. It is all very fine speculating on

death—like Pythagoras or Plato; but I'd like to know what we can make of it, but just the most dreadful thing we can imagine. If there is a futurity, it means judgment; and if there is not, it means irrevocable annihilation. Now, why should you voluntarily run yourself into that iron trap?" said Shadwell, very pale.

"I think, sir, differently of death. Life is ghastlier. Nature points to a less dreadful life in death."

"Nature tells you plainly enough the value of life, by giving us the instinct to cling to and defend it, even in privation and torture. Every man has, of course, some theory about that event. I have mine—you have yours; but we need not test it by martyrdom. If we could open the door, and see, and draw back, of course it would be all very simple. But that's an iron door, Carmel, with a spring lock, of which we have not the key. Once in we are trapped forever. We have only a few minutes now to talk; as I said, I won't discuss it. Now *I* meant you to understand *me*."

"I do, sir—I *do—all* goodness," broke out Sherlock.

"Well—*well*, but that's not what I mean. I don't seek your life. What occurred to-day—if there's any good in swearing—I *swear* it was accident. *I* was more shocked than *you* when it happened. I don't know even *how* it happened; but so far from wishing you any ill, I'll prove to you that my first wish is to serve you."

"Oh, sir! did I ever question it?" pleaded Sherlock.

"I don't know—I hope not—only *listen*. I wish to save you. The door here is bolted; raise that window, and a dozen steps will bring you to the edge of the oak-wood you know so well. Hide yourself there in that impenetrable thicket till twelve o'clock to-night. I shall direct pursuit upon a false scent, and visit you at that hour at the tarn with provisions, and money enough to carry you to America, or where you please. You must wait there for a little time, and I will bring you supplies every night until pursuit begins to slacken; then you cross to France. I'll give you the means of disguising yourself; and you are not the shrewd fellow you have proved yourself up to to-day, if you don't make your way to a place of security. There, raise the window, and go."

Carmel looked on Mark Shadwell earnestly, and raised his finger, and, said he:

"Eight days after I left this I was alone on the side of Penmon Maur, and a shadow of a cloud, shaped like a hand, followed me. I saw it on the low ground first, and my heart died, for it was shaped like the great hand I dreamed of the night before. It was coming up the side of the mountain, spread out, and I knew if the shadow seized me it was a sign. All that man *could* do, to escape, I *did;* but it caught me near a wall of rock facing southward, and a darkness like night overcast me, and a thunderstorm. It was *then* the hand of fate overtook me."

"For God's sake!" whispered Mark, "talk for once like a man of sense; tell your dreams to-morrow. Go now, and do as I've said, and leave me to tell my own story."

Mark Shadwell, whose face was darkened by agitation, pushed him by the shoulder, as he spoke, toward the window.

"*Then*, sir," continued Sherlock, "I would have *died* of cold, or famine, or fatigue, rather than forfeit my liberty. After *that* happened, I sickened of life, and began to long to give myself up—and so the longing grew and grew—until I could bear it no longer—and I came—and here I am, a willing prisoner—and resolved to be either on or off with death."

"I say, Carmel Sherlock, you had better do as I have told you," said Mark Shadwell, sternly. "I run a risk for your sake; you'll have no second chance."

"I have things to tell you about the death of Sir Roke Wycherly that will amaze you—but not now. If you come to me after I go to prison, I will tell you all."

"Don't be a d—d fool," said Shadwell, in a fierce under-tone; "try the chance I give you."

"Forgive me, sir—I can't—I should come back to-morrow—I should go to the prison and give myself up—I can bear it no longer."

"Then you are a worse fool than I took you for," said Mark, with a ghastly laugh; and he looked for a moment as if he would have struck him, but he controlled himself; and he walked to the window which offered the means of escape, in vain—and he looked out for a time—and then turned and said—

"You won't let me be of use to you. I'm sorry, but it can't be helped, I suppose."

He paused, as if to allow Sherlock to reconsider his resolve, but there was no sign of change or hesitation; so he proceeded—

"You spoke of circumstances connected with Sir Roke's death that would surprise me. Well, you choose to go to prison, and to prison you must go. But I'll go there and see you; but whatever these are, I ask but this—keep them for my ears."

"I shall seem to you in one sense a victim. I've had a partner, sir. I love this house, but I ought to *hate* it; sleep is haunted in it, and there are whispers round the corners—ha! I know it."

"Well, if there is any thing worth telling, tell *me*."

"Yes, sir."

"*Me*, mind."

"I know, sir."

There was in Mark's mind considerable curiosity respecting this, but also a stronger loathing; and so, whatever the revelation might be, he was *glad* to put it off to a more convenient season.

Mark went to the door as if to unbolt it, and with his hand to the brass, he paused. He looked at Carmel Sherlock for a moment, and returned a few steps quickly.

"Sherlock," said he in a low tone, placing his hand upon his arm, "You see how I have trusted you; how, in my zeal to save you, I have placed myself in your hands."

"Trusty hands—loving hands," murmured Carmel.

"Need I tell you that, of our conversation in this room, you must promise that not one syllable is repeated?"

"No, sir, I'm deep and dark."

"And don't mistake me, Sherlock. In the presence of others I may seem harsh and unfeel-

ing, but remember, under all disguises, I'm your *friend*. No, not a word; I know *your* feelings—only don't mistake *me*."

And with these words Mark Shadwell hurriedly returned to the door and opened it.

Robson had already got three of the workmen into the hall to be sworn as special constables. The preparations were soon completed, and in their custody Sherlock departed for the prison.

"Vain trying to get him to talk coherently,' said Mark, as he stood upon the steps, and the distant gate closed upon Sherlock and the three men in whose safe keeping he was. "It is impossible now to separate his dreams from his facts. Hanging such a creature would be a mere murder, and it is impossible to rely upon any statement he makes—no matter in what good faith."

CHAPTER LII.

JEST AND EARNEST.

As they stood upon the steps, about to depart, Roger, who in the excitement of their strange visit had forgotten to inquire for Mrs. Shadwell and Rachel, repaired the omission. And young Mordaunt mischievously supplemented his politeness by inquiring for Miss Marlyn, which threw honest Roger into a cruel confusion.

"Oh! Miss Marlyn?" answered Mark, quickly, with a glance in the young man's eyes. "I haven't seen her for some days. I've had too much to think of. It's very unfeeling, I suppose, but I'm afraid I half forgot her existence; why do you ask?" he inquired, rather oddly.

"Miss Temple's sure to ask us. She admires Miss Marlyn immensely, doesn't she, Roger?—and I assure you Temple would get into such a scrape if he could not give an account of her. You have no idea, and the consequence is that Roger is generally sure to inquire."

"What a goose you are!" retorted Roger, with a bashful little laugh and a shake of his head, and a jocular menace with his walking-stick.

"Well," said Shadwell, dryly, "you may tell Miss Temple that whenever any thing goes wrong, my people are sure to tell me; and I fancy if they had any thing unpleasant to report—a cold or a headache—I'd have been sure to hear it; and—" he continued, rather more sharply, "I don't know that she's going to stay with us very long. I suspect she's rather too young to know much about her business."

Roger tried to smile still, but the smile was by no means cheerful, and he was looking down on the steps, and running the point of his cane carefully along the joining on the stones. Mark looked at him with an eye of scarcely concealed contempt.

"And I believe there's nothing more to tell about Miss Marlyn. And the fact is, I'm thinking more about that wretched man who's gone to prison; a useful fellow he was, and so gentle, and I can't conceive how he possibly could—though it may be intelligible enough," he corrected himself. And he walked a little with them on their way back, and took his leave, and smoked at his leisure returning. By the time he reached the hall door his cigar was out, and he cast the stump away with somewhat more violence than was strictly necessary.

"What a disgusting old fool that fellow is; past fifty, and Agnes Marlyn! Upon my soul!"

I don't believe he was thinking of himself. I'm afraid he was kicking and tumbling in the gutter poor Roger Temple's little romance.

"Clever young lady! I shouldn't wonder if she had been making a fool—but that's tinting a rainbow, and throwing perfume on a violet—making a fool of Roger Temple. What a fool that fellow *is!*"

The effect of this little meditation was to send Mark Shadwell directly to his wife's sitting-room up stairs, where he found her.

"I've come to say a word about Miss Marlyn. It's absurd our continuing to keep her here. She's doing no *good*. There's nothing to stare at. I don't mean *mischief*. I simply mean, at a time when I can't afford a guinea, it won't do to go on adding all that young lady costs us to our expenses. If she were worth the money, I might try to get on a little, but she's *not*, and you *know* she's not. It's simply, she's kept here to talk, and laugh, and amuse. There, now you're preparing to cry, but there's nothing to cry *about*. If it *does* amuse you, hang it, do you think it can be any pleasure to me to stop it? It's only one more vexation. But I have not money to spend on any thing of the kind. I told you so before, and I tell you so now; and you must see her, Amy, and tell her so at once."

There was a pause here, and nothing was heard but the little tattoo that Mark was drumming with his finger-tips on the table.

"If you want her in the neighborhood, why don't you place her somewhere—I mean, find her a husband," he said. "There's that clever fellow, Roger Temple. It's a pity he has no ideas, and no teeth, and no hair; but I venture to say that won't prevent any girl's marrying him, if she thinks he has a little money, and she can't find any one with more, to oblige her. I think some one said—didn't there?—she and old Roger liked one another."

He said this with a sour carelessness. He hated Agnes, he was sure, and yet he was curious.

But Amy could only tell him that Roger was enamored, without having excited any corresponding romance.

"Well," said he, returning to his point, "that's not my business. If she thinks she can do better, of course she won't have *him*. Only she must understand that, go where she may, she can't stay here. It ain't caprice, Amy—I may as well tell you—I must get some one in Carmel Sherlock's place. It's quite impossible for me to get through more work than I do; and I must have *one*, at least, where there's ample work for *six*, to look after the never-ending business of this miserable property; unless, indeed, we are prepared to see the whole thing go to pieces before a year.

What could Amy do but acquiesce?

"Of course, you'll do it your own way. I don't mean a scene, or a rudeness; I only want her to understand that she must leave Raby. I believe they get a month's notice, or something; but do it to-day. I shall ask you this evening what is settled."

So saying he turned to leave the room, and

recollected, just at the door, to ask her how she was, and awaited her little story, without, I am afraid, hearing much of it; and then, with a rather absent—"I hope I shall find you better, Amy, by and by," he went on his way alone.

He heard, as he crossed the hall, faintly through the doors, the chords of the piano, and the notes of a sweet, well-known voice. He stopped and listened with feelings bewildered, for a minute, and then, with a sigh and a sneer, passed on. Within were Rachel and Miss Marlyn, who had just stood up from the piano.

"Thanks, darling," said Rachel; "that is the saddest and prettiest song in the world!"

"And the most appropriate," said Agnes, placing her hands on her companion's shoulders, and gazing with her large melancholy eyes into Rachel's face—"for it is a farewell."

"You are not to say that, Pucelle; think of me. What should I do; quite alone, in this great house and place—you can not be so cruel."

"I am not cruel; and yet I am going to speak to your mamma about it to-day. I can't help it, Rachel. There are many reasons, and one is enough. I feel that I am *de trop* here."

"What?"

"Yes; I don't say in *your* way; but it seems to me that your papa has judged me unfavorably. He thinks that you and dear Mrs. Shadwell are too good to me; and he is jealous. He thinks me overrated; and so, I'm sure, I *am*. No; you need not protest. How can you or I know whether I am capable of teaching any thing? and it seems to me that he has conceived a prejudice, not to be got over, against me, and so I am condemned in secret. I ask but for *light*. Who is my accuser; what the charge? I will not stay even to *fancy* that I am suspected. This reason is enough to determine me; but there are others, also. Heaven will not desert me!"

Her eyes were raised as she spoke. There were anguish and indignation in her appealing gaze to Rachel; she looked the embodiment of defenseless innocence; a more practiced eye might have fancied something of the cold art of the melodramatic actress in the beautiful young lady.

"*That*, however, is *one* reason; as I have said, there are *many*. I am sorry I sung that song. It has put me out of spirits. The soldiers march away to the wars to gay tunes. I am away to the great war, and I'll go with pleasant music in my ears."

Down she sat laughing, and played and sung an odd defiant little German song, with a wild, merry refrain, which Rachel did not understand; but the careless gayety of which sounded heartless. The light of the old, cruel smile which she remembered, once or twice, when Agnes drifted away from her reckoning and knowledge into moods and associations which pained and half-frightened her, was there.

With a ringing chord or two, a wild *roulade*, and a silvery laugh, the music ended, and she stood up, still laughing.

The laugh passed into a weary "heigho!" and a rather dismal, restless gaze from the window.

"It was very unfeeling, that little song, wasn't it?" said Agnes, looking at her with a sidelong glance, as she leaned with her slender fingers to her cheek.

This commonplace little speech puzzled Rachel rather. The smile had vanished, like wintry sunshine chased away; but the sadness that had preceded it had not returned. There was no softness there. The eyes that were turned upon her were dark and cold, and just a suspicion of scorn in the features.

"Why do you look at me as if you did not like me?" said Rachel. "I told you once or twice, when you did it before. If you don't like me, I'd rather you told me so."

Miss Marlyn's eyes neither lightened nor softened at this appeal, neither did her dark, cold eyes swerve.

"I was thinking," said she, "of our expedition on which old *La Chouette*, I mean, Madame de la Perriere, dispatched me—not for love, you may be sure—with poor little dried-up Mademoiselle Descatel, in charge of four of the girls who were coughing and wheezing in consumption—such a noise as they made all night! The doctor said they must change the air; and La Chouette had nothing for it but to submit. So she packed us off to a place called Dromonville, and I think it was the oddest climate in the world. It was always either dense fog or brilliant sunshine; the sun was very little, the fog was a great deal. We were only there six weeks, and two of them died there; it was ridiculous—poor things! We were very sorry, of course; but one could not help laughing—and that climate of Dromonville, with its dense fog, and glare of sun, now and then resembles me. I'm in a frank mood, now—too frank, whenever my glare of sunshine comes. One great, fine gleam in fifty days, and then all again in a thick white mist. No eye in nature could pierce it. My natural reserve, forty-nine days of fog—ha, ha, ha!" she laughed suddenly. "Isn't it funny?"

"I don't think it was a bit funny. I think it was very sad about those poor girls," said Rachel.

"Very sad, to be sure! *and* very funny, if you had seen old La Chouette's face, and seen what a fright she was in when she found out that she had killed the two girls."

"I think it's shocking," said Rachel.

"So you should—I knew you would. It *was* shocking. And now with me, for the hour, the fog is rent a little, and that white, fierce sun of Dromonville shines through and hurts the eyes; you see, it is my candid mood."

"I don't think so," said Rachel. "I should call it your mood of—shall I say, affectation. I'm sure you are not like yourself when it is upon you. I like your real self; I don't like this."

Agnes was still looking on her with the same dark and not loving eyes; half, as it seemed, in abstraction, and drumming with her finger-tips on the window-frame.

"*There!*" she said, with a sudden smile; "I find myself still playing that heartless little air; pretty, I think it; but, as I said, very unfeeling of me."

"If you think so," said Rachel, who was growing a little cross, "had you not better stop it? I don't know the meaning of the words, so I can't say."

"Ho! the words? They are merely a comical, little vulgar lamentation over the difficulty of finding a lover, and bringing him to speak his mind; and now that I think, it *was very* unfeel-

ing, considering that you have lost two very interesting lovers so lately—Sir Roke Wycherly, who has been killed, and Carmel Sherlock, who has just gone to prison."

This brutal jest did not seem quite meant as a jest by Miss Marlyn. She did not laugh; she seemed, and looked, both pale and angry.

Rachel retorted this sneer with a surprised and indignant stare. Miss Marlyn laughed; and Rachel, with heightened color and haughty air, was walking out of the room when Agnes intercepted her, and stood facing her, with her pretty shoulders to the door. But, decided as was this procedure, her look and mien were quite changed.

"You won't go, without forgiving me. It is just one of my odious tempers; the result simply of misery. I have offended you, Rachel, by my odious folly; I am going from Raby, and I can not bear the idea of having wounded you. Oh! Rachel, may you never know half my sorrows!"

Thus began a little dialogue quite in a different tone, which ended in a reconciliation, and a little feminine effusion, in which these young ladies embraced; and then, after a very affectionate talk together, Miss Agnes remembered that they must run up stairs to see "dear Mrs. Shadwell."

They found that lady in trouble: she had this disclosure to make, which would quite satisfy Miss Marlyn, and save her the pain of announcing her own intention of leaving; provided that young lady knew her own mind. I don't think she did. However, if she fancied her mind was to go away, she changed color a little, when she heard it; and she smiled, forgetting that a smile was hardly in keeping with her melancholy tone when treating the same subject down stairs.

"Do not, pray, dear Mrs. Shadwell; do not on my account suffer the slightest embarrassment or regret. I had told my dear Rachel that it must be, that I had quite resolved, and was about to leave Raby and my dear friends, because my going would be the best thing for all—was, in fact, as it seemed to me, a duty."

"How a *duty*, I don't see?" said Mrs. Shadwell, looking direct at Agnes.

"Yes, she has been talking of going, but I hoped she would change her mind; and to-day she told me again she would go," said Rachel.

"Yes," said Agnes, gently, and still looking down, she laid her hand fondly on Rachel's arm; "and that *nothing* could alter me."

"But how a duty?" persisted Mrs. Shadwell.

Agnes raised her large, dark eyes sadly, and said: "Does not this command come direct from Mr. Shadwell?"

"Yes—certainly; but new expenses compel us to deny ourselves, for a time, every pleasure we can possibly dispense with," said she.

"Do not fancy, dear Mrs. Shadwell, that I am pleading against a resolution which I do entirely approve. I merely begged to know whether it had first moved from Mr. Shadwell."

At the same time she lowered her eyes again, and glanced along the floor, as if to hide a smile.

"Still you don't say *how* your going should ever have appeared to you in the light of a duty," said Mrs. Shadwell.

Agnes Marlyn continued to look down, and, as Mrs. Shadwell fancied, to smile as before. The lady looked at Rachel a pale hurried glance, charged with a fear which she did not comprehend, and which was as quickly averted.

"I suppose," said Miss Marlyn, raising her eyes, "Mr. Shadwell would prefer seeming to send me away. *You*, madam, are *all* goodness, and Rachel I love; yet I had resolved, as I said, to *go*. He is offended with me, madam."

"Offended, child! no," said Mrs. Shadwell. "Why is he angry?"

"Perhaps, madam, I am too *good*. I mean, if I were more artful and less frank, I should please better. Mr. Temple, the vicar, said in his sermon last Sunday, that the world belongs for the present to the devil, and *his* children prosper best in it. May I now go to my room, madam? I shall have just one letter to write."

"Certainly, Miss Marlyn; but I hope you quite understand there is no idea of hurrying you?"

It was odd, but true, that in so short a time there had grown between Miss Marlyn and Mrs. Shadwell a distance and a formality.

"You have been always *too* good to me, madam," she said, pausing at the door for a moment, before she withdrew.

Mrs. Shadwell remained silent, nothing was heard but the little motion she made on the table with the tip of her crochet-needle, on which she was looking sadly, as if she were tracing with it the epitaph of her lost child. Rachel was looking at her and thinking, with an instinctive feeling of alarm and uncertainty, of the ambiguous looks and language of her beautiful friend Agnes; and she was thinking, too, whether she any longer wished her to remain at Raby. As children see in dreams faces that impress them, they can't explain how, with a sense of malice and deceit, that startle them from a happy sleep in horror, so she saw stealing over that lovely face an unearthly light that chilled her.

CHAPTER LIII.

MISS MARLYN'S RUMINATIONS.

Miss Agnes was not more consistent than, I suppose, other young ladies are. I think she smiled expressly for Mrs. Shadwell's behoof, and she soon began to fancy that she might as well have spared her the pain of that enigmatic gleam of satire.

Was it pride, or irritation, or malice? for, notwithstanding previous appearances, I don't think she liked Mrs. Shadwell a bit. At all events, she thought its effect had been a little more than was quite desirable. It was of course pleasant to sting that heart with the slender arrow of a new sudden pain. The woman was in her way—she owed her a debt of malevolence for the hypocrisies and flatteries to which she had humbled herself. She amused her satire in her scanty correspondence with her one confidential friend and school-fellow, clever Mademoiselle Du Chatelet, a wonderfully pretty brunette, with such exquisitely even little rows of teeth, and such a charming animation, at present established in London, not as yet in so solid or splendid a position as her many perfections would fairly claim. She presides, in fact, at the counter of Dignum's cigar saloons, and presents each gentleman who enters that resort

of betting men, billiard-players, chess-players, etc., Hebrew and Christian, with a cigar and an ivory counter in exchange for his shilling.

I wish you could have seen those wicked sketches of Raby people and pursuits which amused the young lady who fills that dignified position at the cigar saloons.

These descriptions, were even *they* quite sincere? Did brilliant Miss Agnes go herself all lengths with her own satire? Were all her caricatures sure of her own comic sympathy? and did her "dearest Aurelie" know any thing whatever of her real plans and feelings?

I rather think *nothing*. She had little sympathy with those people among whom her lot was cast. Fools they were in her eyes, each according to their folly, and some of them she disliked, not because they were odious, but because they were inconvenient.

Miss Marlyn, as she left Mrs. Shadwell's room and ascended the stairs, wore that serene Madonna-like air and expression which were so touching. But so soon as she got into the security of her own room it was plain enough that this young lady was very angry.

She had not an idea that her departure could be accepted as a settled thing, with so much coolness. It needed, she fancied, but a hint of such a step to plunge this family into consternation, and Mark Shadwell, with all his airs of formality and neglect, into secret dismay. Was vanity ever more mortified?

Miss Marlyn bolted her door, and sat down to commune for a little with her own heart, calling her head also into counsel. It was against Mrs. Shadwell and Rachel that her anger was chiefly kindled. In Mark's hostility there was something to flatter her. Did it not spring from passion—passion not dead, only disguised and perverted? For had he not, with the inconsistency of an undecided character, in the midst of vehement protest and ostensible change, in Bunyan's phrase, "lingered after" his evil yearnings and the ways of death, and kept her secret well?

She could contemplate Mark's condition with complacency. But it was otherwise in the case of the women. Of her own sex she was profoundly suspicious. Cowardice is our weakness, thought she, and our strength is treachery, these Shadwell's are two fools; but with the usual duplicity, with all her caresses, that woman has been jealous for nearly two months, and the sneak dared not betray it to her husband or move me from Raby; and now he has talked, of course, of sending me away, and she submits—angelic submission!—and without consulting him tells me I'm to go, and so, she fancies, pins him to that resolve, "and Miss Rachel, of course, she knew perfectly what her mamma was thinking of. I'm not angry, dear, only amused," murmured Miss Marlyn, with a pale smile, in which was something both of malice and victory, as she gently rose and got her paper and envelopes.

But when she sat down, with her pen in her fingers, she found that she was not in the vein of letter-writing, and she drew a crowd of profiles instead all over the sheet of paper, all the time in a deep reverie, finishing the noses and other features with a touch so careful and delicate that one might have fancied she was etching for her bread and fame.

Looking carefully at one of these, which she held up before her eyes, she murmured, with a bitter smile, not seeing it, I think:

"Bauldie! what an idea! Roger Temple, I may come back to you, Bauldie, if every thing goes wrong, in ten years' time. You'll be nothing the worse of the wait. You'll not have a tooth or a hair less, but you would not do to begin with; no, Bauldie, I must try my fortune before I spoil it. One brilliant chance already spoiled by a *coup* of ill fortune! Lady Wycherly, I should have been." She set her teeth resolutely, and tapped her little knuckles fiercely on the dressing-table. "He could not have helped it—nothing could have prevented. Well, we must only try again. He's quite gone—quite, quite, quite. I hate thinking of him. I'm always fancying that old face,"—she peeped over her shoulder,—"I have many years, and the game has many turns." Here she hummed a little air, and a moment after she laughed. Poor little Monsieur La Roque! with your *nez retroussé* and dolorous old face, what a lover you were, with your *chassée* and your *pas de sylphide*, and your little fiddle, my first lover, at fifty-nine years old! You had your brilliant hopes all dashed in a moment by an impertinence of fortune. To be in the very act of winning two hundred thousand francs—the ball stopped—the croupier, with rouge on the tip of his tongue, and La Roque a made man, when down falls the house! and La Roque, croupier, roulette-table, company, candles, all, all—buried under fourteen feet of bricks, boards, plaster, tiles, and rubbish! Poor little La Roque! How you used to relate the tragedy and your own extrication, after eight-and-twenty hours passed between a hearthstone and a dead Jew, and yours and his discovery, reposing together like the 'Babes in the Wood,' only strewn over with three packs of cards, instead of the leaves! Well, down fell *my* house also, at the moment of fortune, and killed it, buried that stake, but I shall play again. I don't give it up, like you! What a wicked, insane, ridiculous creature I am! Is there another such on earth?"

And the young lady, who thus described herself, made a courtesy before the glass, and laughed gayly on her own beautiful face.

This young lady came down in a little while, saint-like and sad. But Mrs. Shadwell was changed, cold, formal, quite a different Mrs. Shadwell, on whose pained and averted face the sad, appealing glances of Agnes Marlyn were wasted.

I think the young lady had misgivings as to the good sense of her little experiment of that day.

"Your mamma is angry?" said Miss Agnes to Rachel.

"I never saw her angry; I have seen her offended, though," said Rachel.

"Well, offended; I did not mean that she is in a passion."

Rachel made no reply. They were now in the hall, going out for their walk.

"Rachel!" said Miss Agnes, in the tone of a person good-humoredly calling up a child from a nap.

"Well?"

"Come; why need we quarrel at present?"

"I don't understand you, Agnes; I don't want to quarrel; and I don't care to talk." And Rachel was silent again.

"Unsociable little woman! Because I have shown a momentary wickedness, for which I am sorry, you would put me in Coventry—your mamma would forgive me, but you can't," said Agnes.

"I don't think you had any business talking to mamma as you did, and looking at her, and smiling at her; I never felt so angry in my life," said Rachel with spirit.

"You are not so angry with me as I am with myself; but I am unhappy, and misery is one of the many roads to wickedness, and so I have been odious; and then comes remorse—I am *sorry*. When you said I looked, and smiled, and talked, as I ought not, I might have said, as other girls would, 'what *can* you mean?' and looked innocently surprised, and all that; but I disdain that, and instead, I say, I am *sorry!*"

Rachel looked at her, but there was inquiry and distrust in her eyes. Confidence is sometimes as hard to give back as love.

"I see you don't like me; you will never like me again."

Rachel was silent.

"No—never—but you may *forgive*, and bear with me while I stay; and when you have experienced half the sorrow I have, you may understand how grief makes us bitter, and bitterness makes us impatient of all good restraints. You can not like me, I see you can not even forgive me, perhaps; but at least you may pity and indulge me for the few days that I shall still remain at Raby, and when I am gone, and your task ended, perhaps you will remember me less unkindly."

"Which way shall we walk, Agnes?" said Rachel, on whom this appeal of Agnes Marlyn's did not act quite as usual.

"You shall choose, Rachel; and you shall forgive me, by and by, said Agnes. "*Do* choose!"

"I don't care, really;" and Rachel looked half disposed to turn back, and put off her walk to to-morrow.

"Well, suppose we go toward Wynderfel?" said Agnes.

"I shan't go to Wynderfel again for a long time; I have a horror of that place. Wretched Carmel Sherlock was taken there, and wounded, and we met Sir Roke Wycherly there also. I hate it; I think it a ghastly place," said Rachel.

"And it is too far away," said Agnes, looking toward the summits of the distant trees that surround those old walls. "The sun would have set by the time we had reached it; but suppose we just ramble a little among those trees close by; they are so noble, and the sun shines up among the grass between them so softly."

Rachel and Agnes walked on together.

"What a pity it is you don't know something of the world, my poor little Rachel," said Miss Agnes, looking toward the setting sun. "I don't mean the great world, or the bad world, but simply men and women—what our vicar calls human nature, and preaches about, although *he* doesn't know any thing about it either; it is bad living in a solitude like this—living among affectations—it is not simplicity, it is not even ignorance, for every recluse knows all the time what she is."

"I am not conscious of being any thing I don't seem," said Rachel.

"No, perhaps not; I dare say you know yourself very moderately; but you can take short, hard views of the few persons you meet; you can thank them as little as you please for what they do; the flatteries of a few dozen old servants who know they would not be tolerated in other houses; and the idolatry of your mamma—don't be vexed—make you fancy yourself a paragon. Living in a desert, in the midst of prejudiced admiration, *always* has that effect, it would upon me, it has upon you—and you think it is only natural and right that all the world should admire, and love, and pet you; but, my dear, the meaning of the *world* is simply equality—the human republic; don't you see, *egalité, liberté, fraternité!* and with what measure you mete, it will be measured to you again."

"I think I saw papa this moment," said Rachel, dryly.

"Oh!" murmured Miss Agnes.

"Yes, walking down there, among the chestnut trees, where we are going; hadn't we better turn? he might not like to be disturbed."

"Oh, yes—turn—to be sure!" said Miss Marlyn, a little peevishly. "Are we not curious people here, with all our simplicity, afraid of meeting one another; so many little rules and crotchets, formalities and distances, unconscious contempts, and absurd egotisms. Pray cry, *à bas* the whole thing! and *vive* the other true forms of common sense which I have named!"

She turned, and they walked in another direction.

"Yes, of *course*, if Mr. Shadwell was there."

Was Miss Marlyn beginning to sneer again? Rachel glanced at her quickly.

"Well! I look at you again; do I look very wicked, or very mad? I don't feel it. Here is the translation of my little speech," said Miss Marlyn. "Your papa is my *enemy*, I am sorry to say, and being so, I should rather never see him more, that is all. Is it unnatural?"

"It is possible not to like another, and yet not be their enemy," said Rachel, gravely.

Miss Agnes looked at her for a moment, and then, on a sudden, her sense of the ridiculous seemed irresistibly moved, for she laughed, long and merrily, not a sarcastic laugh, quite the contrary, a perfectly good-humored, and even good-natured one, and the more grave Miss Rachel looked, the more heartily she laughed.

Rachel struggled to maintain her gravity for a time, but the contagion eventually overpowered her, and she was constrained to join in her companion's laughter; and they laughed in rivalry till they almost cried.

"At last," said Agnes, recovering, but still breathless, laying her hand lightly upon Rachel's arm: "I've been lecturing you, and you have been freezing me—so much satire, and so much dignity—and all thrown away, for we *can't* quarrel; no, Rachel, we can't, it is not in us. When we try it, laughter comes in, and the whole thing breaks down, and leaves us just as we were before, and—here we are."

And with these words her arms were about Rachel's neck, and she kissed her; and Rachel returned the caress, saying:

"I do believe, Pucelle, you are right, and it is no use trying to quarrel—but you have been very disagreeable."

"And odious; and you have been just as bad. And now, see, the sun is within half an inch of Feltram hill, and you know, as the vicar says, we must not let him go down on our wrath."

So she kissed her and was kissed again, and very amicably the two girls returned from their walk.

CHAPTER LIV.

SUSPENDED CHANGE.

After this little escapade Miss Agnes Marlyn seemed very penitent. Loving and pleasant with Rachel, and very contrite in presence of Mrs. Shadwell, she was not content with this distant and imperfect expression of her regrets in presence of her offended "benefactress," as she used to call her, but made long lamentations in her walks with Rachel, reproached herself, and was so *désolé*, and so engaged her companion to undertake her cause that Mrs. Shadwell forgave, and tried to forget the little scene which had seemed to suggest a suspicion of that kind of impertinence which no woman can tolerate.

She had indeed lost the place she once had in Mrs. Shadwell's affection. But she seemed content with the portion of regard that remained to her, and grateful for it.

"I'm going away so soon, going so *very* soon, we must not have a clouded hour till that which is clouded by parting."

There seemed to have grown upon her, with her penitential and loving mood, an increased dislike of Mr. Shadwell, a systematic avoidance of him, which might result chiefly from wounded pride, but which might also have a more malignant antipathy for its basis. The distant apparition of this gloomy man, the wide-awake hat, the short weather-beaten velveteen coat and the gun, approaching among the trees startled her, as the sight of the distant ranger might the wary deer, or turn her course as it might the flight of a bird. Often, as she or Rachel walked together, Agnes would, on a sudden, change the direction of their route, and, perhaps, a minute later, Rachel would see the cause of this deviation in the distant figure of her father. In the house, too, the sound of his step would suffice to hush her music or her voice, and to arrest her step or withdraw it from the threshold of her door.

This avoidance, too, was not unobserved by the object of it, and, I think, it made him secretly angry. He was suffering now, and things that would once have amused, or at most piqued him, now filled him with fury.

A day or two had restored Agnes Marlyn very nearly to her former footing with Rachel. After all, there was nothing tangible to lay to her charge, and how could she keep up a quarrel upon a mere caprice of temper? In fact they were as good friends as ever; Agnes, when she pleased, could make herself very amusing and winning to her young companion, and now she did choose. So Rachel often insinuated a good word for Agnes in her occasional conversations with her mother. But Mrs. Shadwell made no answer on these occasions. She neither seemed pleased, nor the least disposed to discuss Miss Marlyn with her daughter, who wondered that her mamma, usually the most placable of mortals, could so resent a mere impertinence, already repented of with so much contrition.

By one of those instinctive processes, which are accomplished in a moment of time, Miss Marlyn had undergone a transformation in the eyes of Mrs. Shadwell. Not all the logic of the subtlest sophist, not all the oratory of angels, could restore her to her former shape.

Agnes talked plaintively to Rachel of her approaching departure.

"I have written this morning," she used to say, "to my only friend in London, Mademoiselle Du Chatelet, whom I knew two years ago at Madame de la Perriere's school—too good, much too good, for that place. She gave up her situation there, being shy and grave, and is now housekeeper in an institution in London." The reader will remember that the "Institution" was the famous "Dignum's Cigar Saloons," and that her "housekeeping" consisted in presenting cigars and counters, with the prettiest taper fingers and dimpling smiles, with the prettiest little lace *coiffure*, and a perfectly Parisian get-up, across a table at the foot of the great stairs there, to the gentlemen who, from ten o'clock P.M., began to pass up that splendidly-illuminated ascent. "I have entreated her to look out for me some little convenient nook, where I may very quietly hide my foolish head, until some situation, quiet, and perhaps more humble than my present one, turns up."

I don't believe, however, that her friend, Mademoiselle Du Chatelet, was conscious of any such intimation or request contained in any one of the letters with which her old friend, from time to time, enlightened and amused her.

Agnes Marlyn had herself, in a low musical minor, alluded hastily once or twice, in Mrs. Shadwell's presence, to her approaching departure. But Mrs. Shadwell evinced no intention whatever of interrupting her preparations, or of discussing the subject with her.

Miss Marlyn's heart swelled, but not with any tender regrets, under this insensibility.

As in the solitude of her room she undressed that night, she smiled:

"The stupid little woman! with her airs and *hauteurs*. How I laugh at her! Is there, madame, never more than one way of reaching a point? It may not be so easy a matter to put me out of Raby. There are none of you here so holy that you frighten me. This kind goeth not forth so easily."

"Why does not that woman go about her business?" demanded Mark of his wife, rather savagely, next day.

"She says she's going immediately," answered she. "I have said nothing to delay her departure—I can't hasten it, you know, Mark, for even if I were to try to do so, I could not. She has a right to remain here nearly a fortnight longer."

"The devil she has!"

"I wrote down the date on which I gave her notice, as you wished."

"I hate that charming young woman," said Mark.

"Hate her?"

"Well, that's too strong—but I don't like her."

"I did not know that, Mark; you only said you thought her useless."

"I dare say I did not. If she were useful, of course—but then she is not, so, without fear of removing a valuable person, I may say that I dislike her."

"But why dislike her, Mark?" asked his wife, who had grown curious in some things, of late.

"Because I think she laughs at us; I don't care a farthing, of course. Do you like her?"

"I think she is a little odd—but I think Rachel likes her very much."

"You don't," said he.

"Why should I not?"

"Oh! come, you know you don't; and why do you look at me as if I had two heads, when I say I feel as you do?"

"I—I really did not intend, Mark—"

"Ho! but you did it," said Mark, with a short laugh of scorn, who did not choose to be looked at either in that way or in curiosity. "You looked as if you intended to see through me, and read my soul."

Amy's usually pale face actually flushed a little.

"I had no such idea, I as sureyou, Mark."

"Yes, you had, I don't know what for though, and I can't say I much care."

He walked over to the window, and stood there for awhile looking out, and suddenly turned about, saying—

"I think you have all got a way of peering at me—I don't know what you want, it is the most offensive thing on earth. If there's any thing you want to know, you've got the use of your tongues, I suppose. Why the devil can't you put your questions? I wish I could assure you, Amy," he added, with a change of tone, perceiving how frightened his poor little wife was by his violence, "that there is nothing—neither ill luck nor good—concealed from you. I hide nothing, absolutely, and you can't imagine, when one is harassed by never-ending real vexations, as I am, about which, heaven knows! I have never made a secret; how it pesters one to be watched and wondered at as if I were a witch, or the man in the 'Iron Mask!' I hate Agnes Marlyn, if you want to know, simply because I think she laughs at us."

"Laughs at us, Mark?"

"Yes, at our poverty and shabbiness, and all our miserable ways; this great gaunt wilderness of a house, with a handful of poor people living in a corner of it; and this desolate place, a dozen miles round, the picturesque and solemn principality of starvation. I quite understand her; you don't. Do you fancy I believe one word of her talk about rural repose, and sylvan seclusion, and all that stuff? A French girl! For *that* she is, in all her thoughts, and ways, and tastes. The idea is too absurd! It was quite evident to me from the first, that she alighted here, like a foreign bird, to fly elsewhere. Settle down at Raby, indeed! But it doesn't matter. In fact, I'm poorer than ever, and she can't remain here."

"I've been thinking, Mark, it is very bad for you living so entirely shut up as you do," said his poor little wife, prescribing, as good wives do.

"I'm going down to Raby to-day; there's a market there; rather a dissipation, isn't it? and I want to see three of my Feltram tenants—mine, I call them; I don't know why, I'm sure; very little of their rent comes to my share. I'm utterly sick of the whole thing. I must have rest; and so soon as I can get a clever fellow to help me, I'll ascertain exactly how I stand, make the best terms I can, and renounce Raby, Wynderfel, and all the rest, forever; and whoever gets them I hope may burn their fingers, and break their hearts, like me."

The handsome figure and face of the Squire of Raby, when he showed in public, never failed in his own county to excite a curious, and for the most part, a respectful wonder; and many eyes and whispered comments followed that haughty and solitary man, as he walked slowly through the main street of Raby. Silently people made way for him, and many country farmers who owned no territorial relations with him, knowing vaguely what great people the Shadwells had been, the oldest blood in that region, touched their hats as he passed, and eyed him with interest.

Having talked with his farmers, he was now strolling homeward from the village, when he was overtaken by Doctor Stalton, trotting leisurely on his tour of professional visits. The doctor checked his pace to a walk on recognizing Mark Shadwell. He was one of the few residents in that wide region whom the Squire could talk to.

"Well, doctor! we don't often meet on the roads here; I don't trouble them much," said Mark, with a gloomy smile.

"I'm very glad to see you about, however; it's a great pity we don't see more of you: I hope you'll excuse me! It is, indeed, Mr. Shadwell."

"They don't seem to like me particularly, when they do," said Shadwell, with an unpleasant laugh.

"Well, now, you know, Mr. Shadwell, you must be reasonable," answered the physician, with a smile, and a reproachful shake of the head.

"Reasonable! I should like to know when I was any thing else," he replied, with a sour look at his outspoken companion.

"Well, it isn't reasonable, I think, for you expect them, don't you see, to be neighborly with you, while you hold aloof from them. You won't forget old scores and let old wounds heal. You avoid them, and refuse to take your place among them as a country gentleman, and—you musn't be vexed with me—you shirk even your duty as a magistrate, and take a pleasure in letting them feel that you don't avoid them from indolence or shyness, but distinctly from personal hostility; and then you wonder they don't like you, and that, I say, is not reasonable."

"But I don't wonder. I don't expect them to like me; and, which is just as much to the purpose, it was they, not I, who chose those relations, and insulted me with a thousand petty vulgar insults, just because they knew Raby owed money; left out of every thing, never once in my right place. Why, there isn't a family in this county but ours, and just two or three others—you could count them, by heaven! on the fingers of one hand—that is not perfectly new.

It is the most upstart county in England: I'm talking of the fellows who hold up their heads, nowadays, as county families. Take old Mervyn, for instance, what is he? Every one knows what the Mervyns were: Welsh gardeners at Raby; and a very nice thing they must have made of our gardens, by Jove! I have the old lease of The Oaks, in George the Second's time, and he is called Thomas Merven—v-*e*-n, not v-*y*-n: that was a refinement," he sneered, "Thomas Merven, Gardener, to Sir Soame Shadwell, of Raby, Knight; and old Mervyn pays me to this hour thirty pounds a year under that very lease: didn't you know that?"

And Shadwell laughed viciously.

"And there are the Jessons, and the Drakes—*that's* even more recent: city tradesmen—nothing the worse for that, of course, if they did not affect to lead the county. And you think I'm to bear affronts from people like that, and trot about the country from one court-house to another, to admire their liveries, and try to propitiate them. Upon my soul, sir, I'll do no such thing! I think they were ten times as deserving of respect when they were in their proper places, looking after grapes and asparagus beds, or standing behind their counters weighing figs—d—them!"

"Well, of course, an old family has an advantage," begun the doctor.

"Very little; it's just something—not much: I'm not going upon that. All I say is, that people who get up among us, like mushrooms about the roots of old trees, ought not to affect airs of superiority, or to be surprised, if they insist on their money, at our remembering their origin. When did you visit Applebury jail last—no fever there?"

"No; very healthy just now. My last call was the day before yesterday."

"And did you see Sherlock?"

"No; he's not ailing."

"I shouldn't wonder if it burst out, all at once, in downright, furious madness. See what a time it has been smouldering, and no one suspected danger in it, till a life was lost. Have you formed any opinion respecting Sherlock's case—professional opinion, of course, I mean?"

"Well, I can't say I have; one has lots of things to consider. I need not tell you, that a fellow may be very eccentric indeed, and yet be perfectly free from madness."

"Is it one of the subjects you are well up upon—I mean, have you studied it carefully?"

"I can't say I have; I know it generally though, of course. If it turned out that there was madness in Sherlock's family, I should have very little doubt; but it is possible that his motive may have had nothing illusory about it; and I doubt if there's a case strong enough to relieve him of the consequences of his act."

"Would there be any thing odd, do you think, in my going over to the prison to see him?" asked Shadwell, walking beside the doctor's horse, and looking down on the road, in his rumination.

"Odd? I don't see how there could, if their rules allow it," said the doctor.

"No, of course—if their rules allow it—as you say."

"But," said the doctor, with a shrewd smile, "I don't say, mind, that were *I* concerned, I should like to see him."

"I don't understand," said Shadwell.

"I mean, you know, upon the subject of the Raby tragedy, as the newspapers call it," said the doctor, with a *maladroit* jocularity, under which the Squire of Raby secretly winced.

"I didn't know that the papers called it so," said Shadwell, a little dryly.

"Because," said the doctor, not minding, "he might—such a queer fellow, you know!—let out something that might make a very hanging witness of you, don't you see? and I'd rather give him his chance, than have a hand in the fluke that hanged him. Eh?"

"Oh! as to that, I should not allow him to open his lips on the subject. Of course it was just that, having lived so long and served so faithfully, people might think it unfeeling, especially knowing that the crime was committed probably under the direct influence of disease, that I should never have looked in upon him during his imprisonment. I don't see that it can do him the least good, and I should much rather escape the pain of seeing him; but I may as well tell you plainly, that I should not like to be thought insensible or cruel in the case of this poor devil. It is simply a question—not of feeling, but opinion, what will people think?"

"Well, there are things for and against, you know," said the doctor, drawing his bridle and coming to a halt, for they had reached the gate of Raby. "People talk over every thing, you know;" and as the doctor sat turned in his saddle, with his hand on his knee, he whistled low a thoughtful bar of a tune which ended in silence, and lowering his eyes from the yellow leaves of the trees at the road-side, he said—

"There are situations in which it is not easy to say what's right and what's wrong, or how people will take any thing we do; and I think for the present I would let Carmel Sherlock quite alone, and not go near him."

And so he took his leave, and trotted briskly away. Mark nodded and smiled his adieux, and then walked slowly up to the house, ruminating moodily.

CHAPTER LV.

PURSUER AND FUGITIVE.

As he approached his house the low evening sun shone up from the western horizon, and flooded the air with splendor. From glittering ivy, from thickets, from the discolored foliage of lofty boughs, the birds sang out their vesper lays and glorified the coming hour of rest and the Great Creator who cares for all his creatures. All nature far and wide glowed and saddened in this melancholy smile. The crows, high in air, glided in wide procession, with busy cawings, faint and airy, toward the distant woods of Wynderfel. The peculiar pleasant chill of autumn evenings sharpened the air, and the faint white mists came up over distant plain and hill.

A man with a sense of the beautiful is thrilled by such scenes and hours, but in certain states of mind it is with the pain of a discord. Shadwell stopped, and saw and heard the spectacle and the sounds around him. The rapture of silent worship and profound enjoyment, which

other men experience in such contemplation, in him was displaced by a dreadful impatience, a fatigue amounting almost to despair, and he groaned.

The old question was floating and tumbling in his mind to and fro, like a dead body rolled hither and thither in the sea. What was the purpose of all this? What was the meaning of this parade of joy, so insincere—of glory in the midst of pain and death? To what purpose, for himself or others, had *he* been brought into the world? or how could the Creator scandalize his benevolence by the production of such a complication of misery as Mark Shadwell and his surroundings?

Mark was one of those men who do not stick at a contradiction. Whatever good came to him, he thanked himself for; whatever evil befell him, he laid at the door of heaven.

As he leaned with folded arms wearily against a tree, an object met the eye of that volatile man which suddenly changed the tenor of his thoughts. He saw Miss Marlyn alone, for a slight cold kept Rachel at home that day, approaching by the path which led close by the very tree at which he stood, toward the house.

A sudden wish to meet her stirred within him.

The old dangerous interest was, for a moment, rekindled and mingling strangely with his resentment. In such situations and alone men are determined by impulse. There is no time for debate. Had she come up to the spot where he stood, he would at that moment have accosted and joined her, most likely, in her homeward walk.

But this one flagrant inconsistency—and blessed are those sages whose lives are not full of inconsistencies—was prevented by Miss Marlyn's suddenly diverging from the path, at right angles, and passing quickly out of sight.

"Ha! she saw me," thought Mark, "and she fancies I don't know that she saw me; or, perhaps she wishes me to see that she avoids me. A heartless young devil she is. She's right to avoid me, though: she's wise. The guilty don't care to confront the judge. She does honestly wish to avoid me, and she shan't. She is walking now by the stile-path, and will reach the hall door, she fancies, uninterrupted; but she is wrong. I will meet her at the two birch-trees."

For the first time, for many days, with a petty object that really interested him for the moment, Mark Shadwell, with a faint smile of scorn, marched swiftly at the near side of the sylvan screen, bent upon intercepting the enemy.

When he came within sight of the two birch-trees he slackened his pace to that dilatory and gloomy saunter in which he was wont to prosecute those objectless rambles which served to consume the time which he hated.

He was now again upon her line of march, and very soon she emerged, and the same graceful though muffled figure was again approaching him.

Once more, however, and earlier than before, he was detected. Nothing could be more natural than Miss Marlyn's divergence, more easy, more unconscious, and yet he knew perfectly that this *détour*, like the last, was made with the express purpose of avoiding him.

Is there such a thing as spontaneous drunkenness? This little occurrence suddenly sobered Mark. What had he been doing? He felt ashamed of himself; and the suspicion that Agnes Marlyn saw his pursuit, and deliberately mortified him with the humiliation of avoidance, made him angry, with that sort of anger which, being mixed with self-disgust, is one of the most galling passions to which we are subject.

There are some men—not perhaps more conceited than others, but more proud and sensitive—whom it is not safe to pique, who grow haughty, repellant, and contemptuous under the arts which excite and allure other men. Mark Shadwell's self-love was wounded. He fancied that she would think him her captive, and secretly glory in his baffled pursuit. He was angry, too, with himself: for had he not found out that she was not so absolutely indifferent to him as he had begun to believe?

Later that evening he accidentally met and passed Miss Marlyn at the foot of the great staircase. He had presence of mind to regulate his looks and demeanor to that precise tone which would indicate a genuine and hopeless indifference. A very slight recognition, with just the shadow of a bow, a faint cold smile, and that slight air of abstraction which indicates thoughts remote.

Miss Marlyn was grave, reverential, penitent, he thought; and with downcast eyes she slipped by: the transit was quite mute. Mark thought he had decidedly the best of it. Could by-play be better than his, and *was* Miss Marlyn's really indifferent?—or, considering how clever an actress she must be to have practiced so successfully so dangerous and protracted a deception, was it even *intended* to express indifference? Some wild thoughts were beginning again to haunt him. But was he not a philosopher? Did he not believe in enlightened reason, and the omnipotence of will? What had he to fear?

As that night Mark Shadwell sat alone in his library, smoking slowly cigar after cigar, with one foot upon the fender, and his elbow on his knee, he took this spectre to task, and analyzed himself, finding, if some clay, which he passed over lightly, also much good iron, and store of refined gold in the image which he worshiped; and he reasoned also with the phantom which troubled him, and finally resolved to invite it no more, but to banish it with an irrevocable exorcism and never more be under the spell of its cruel eye.

And then suddenly came the image of Carmel Sherlock on his lonely pallet in his cell, with his bandaged arm, and crazy thoughts, talking with himself, forlorn, moaning the praises of his "benefactor," and pining under a curse.

Then suddenly peeped a face, yellow, sharp with its hateful smirk, and immortal fixedness; and at that look he was again where he had been, sitting alone in outer darkness with his thoughts.

Mark Shadwell thought he heard a light step cross the hall toward his door. He held his breath and listened, looking over his shoulder, half expecting to see some one enter. But nothing of the kind happened.

He looked at his watch: it had grown late.

The hour of rest had arrived for all but himself, and there was no eccentric, desultory spirit now in his house, such as poor Carmel Sherlock had been.

Mark was not now so nervous a man as he had been when last I described him in this same room on the eve of the inquest. He listened until he had satisfied himself that no step was in motion in the hall, and then he resumed his cigar and his ruminations. Mark preferred sitting up: he would have preferred going out, and passing the hours in a solitary march about the place to going to his bed, where his thoughts and imaginings were always the most troubled. In the night-time, in the attitude of seeking sleep, if sleep will not come, the afflicted man lies at the mercy of his thoughts, which hover over him, as vultures over the dead, and perch and probe and ransack where they will.

To smoke, and sip from time to time brandy and water, and resolve that he had done with Raby, that he had known too much of solitude, and drunk deep and long enough of its horrors, and must change all; go to some colony and rough it there—but mix with men, it might be as moody and short-tempered as himself—still human beings, who would talk to him, exercise his thoughts, and—all the better—his temper, and prevent his growing morbid and atrabilarious, as any man shut up in Raby must do.

And so he would turn over a new leaf, or begin a new book in his history, and bury the volume of his Raby existence, its isolation, visions, and horrors, certain fathoms in the earth.

If he could once shake himself free of this old sprawling property, with its inextricable complications and awful debt in which he was immeshed, and under which he groaned and stumbled hopelessly, and set his foot on Canadian or Australian earth with a purse in his hand, and that hand free, there would be a career before him at last. Centuries ago his ancestor had left his Norman land and dwelling, and come here to Wynderfel. Centuries before that, again, *his* ancestor had left his old northern home and found a new one in France. There were periods of decay and renovation. The serpent must change his skin, a great collapse, a great resuscitation, and then a long new brilliant life for the Shadwells of another hemisphere. So, full of his resolution, with perhaps a real flash of the old sea-king spirit—enfeebled by circumstance and by habit—he stood up with his back to the fire, chucked the stump of his cigar into the grate, and frowned defiance in the front of imaginary obstacles.

In this silence, with the distinctness that belongs to small sounds at night, he heard the same light step cross the oak floor of the hall quickly, and stop at his door.

He did not move; he listened and watched the door frowning. Not the slightest sound or motion followed. Who on earth could it be? Conjecture failed him. Who could be up and about now? It was not the tread of Old Mother Wyndle; nor of his invalid wife. It was a quick, light, young step. The sharp faint click of the shoe was still in his ear. Agnes Marlyn was out of the question. Rachel not possible either. D—n it, whoever it was, why could not they open the door? He could not get it out of his head that his stealthy visitor was Carmel Sherlock. He had a strange idea of Sherlock's ingenuity and resource. He had managed his escape and concealment without accomplice or assistant, with a success, the completeness of which savored of natural magic. Pursuit was defeated; the police baffled. He never would have been taken, Mark was certain, had he not chosen to give himself up, and then he had himself selected the place and agents of his capture. "That fellow could make his way out of the jail and into this house if he liked, and no one suspect him. He'd venture it for a fancy. He'd come back for his fiddle." In Mark's mind this crazy creature, whom he generally despised, yet in a vague way considered a wizard, excited his admiration and his fear, and the associations connected with him were horrible.

A sharp, light knock sounded on the study door. Mark felt oddly, chilled with the sense of a coming crisis. His instinct whispered truly. A crisis was at hand. Its angel stood at the other side of the door.

"Come in," said Mark, gazing with the pale frown of suspense at the door.

And in obedience to his invitation, the handle was turned, and the door gently opened.

CHAPTER LVI.

A SHRIFT.

"GOOD God! is it you?" said Mark, in a wild whisper, quite forgetting his indifference and disdain, after an interval of utter silence.

He was amazed, as well he might, to see Miss Agnes Marlyn before him. Never did painted martyr, on oriel window, with arms crossed over girlish bosom, and head inclined, in the melancholy glory of her beauty and her fate, look lovelier or sadder than this vision.

There was no palm nor glory, indeed. This beauty was in truth more voluptuous than saintly. But Rafael could not have painted a sadder face.

It is said that the thoughts of the bravest man, suddenly wounded by gun-shot, are seldom very clear. Perhaps that sort of shock and hurry most nearly resembled Mark Shadwell's.

"I couldn't think who it was," said Mark, after another pause.

"No, sir, of course, I have been quite out of your thoughts, you have had so much to think of, and you may have supposed that I had already left Raby," said Miss Marlyn, in tones of low sweet melancholy, which well accorded with the sadness of her looks; and as she spoke her eyes rested on the floor, and her delicate fingers still touched the handle of the door, as if she were uncertain whether her timid intrusion, hardly beyond the threshold, would be permitted, and ready, as it seemed, at a look, to vanish and come no more,

"Left Raby? No; I didn't fancy *that*. You don't go till the 30th, unless you prefer it. My wife tells me, however, that you wish to go on the 19th," said Mark Shadwell.

"Very good of Mrs. Shadwell; so good! yes, I told her so,"

"Oh, yes!" said Mark, recovering his ordinary tone rapidly. "I know pretty well what is going

on in my house; and this I must say, Miss Marlyn," he resumed after a few seconds, "that you are about the last person, I should have fancied, who could have desired an interview with me."

As he said this, Mark suddenly remembered his little game of hide-and-seek that evening, and he bethought him, with a qualm of shame, what secret ridicule the dignity of his air was possibly provoking at this moment, and he subsided suddenly.

One momentary glance, however, from the corner of his eye told him that there was no gleam, not the faintest, of any such feeling in her sad features.

"Putting other things aside, Miss Marlyn, doesn't it strike you as a very odd time at which to seek an interview with me?" he said, a little sarcastically.

"In some respects very odd, as you say, Mr. Shadwell," she replied. "In others, in that of one of probable freedom from interruption, the best possible time. The world—and stupid people who have but one rule and measure for all our acts, who take no account of character and never discriminate motive—would, of course, censure me, and charge me with an audacity which my nature utterly abhors. I see that smile, sir, but I don't fear it; before I leave this room, Mr. Shadwell, I will show you that if I come here at an *odd* hour, to secure an uninterrupted interview, I do so from the purest sense of duty. I owe it, I will not say to you only, but to your family. There is something which I must divulge, and I accept the risk, and, if you will, the sacrifice."

Mark Shadwell stared hard at Miss Marlyn, but her eyes were lowered as before.

"I can't form the faintest conjecture as to what you mean, Miss Marlyn. I don't pretend to read riddles; *but* I venture to say that were any accident to bring a third person to the room, don't you see how unaccountable it would appear?"

"I'm not afraid, if you are not, sir. With me it weighs as nothing in comparison."

Did she sneer? There was nothing but gentleness and sadness in her tone. He glanced again at her. No, it was not mockery. It was almost pathetic. It was a scene of audacious humility.

"Well, Miss Marlyn, do, pray, say what you mean!"

"Ah! Mr. Shadwell, have you not sent me a cruel message?" said she.

"I *have* sent you a message—that is, I have requested my wife to say that you must go," said he, grimly enough.

"Yes, a cruel message! And I ask why?"

"Why! Miss Marlyn. Do you seriously ask me why?" he answered, with fierce contempt.

"Ah! Mr. Shadwell, you are one of those who judge and punish your friends unheard," she murmured.

"Now you must excuse me, Miss Marlyn, but this is really too cool," said Shadwell, with a bitter scoff.

"Well, I will put two cases. Suppose I have been as foolish and wrong as you choose to think,—are people who do wrong never forgiven?"

"Go on," said Shadwell, smiling angrily.

"And suppose the alternative—oh! you must spupose it!—that, placing your own perverted construction upon letters which you took from my desk and read, you have understood neither the feelings, nor the purposes, nor the situation of the person whom you stigmatize. Nothing—nothing—nothing!"

"Upon my honor, Miss Marlyn, all things considered, I am tempted to think you have come here to indulge an odd vein of pleasantry," said Mark Shadwell, growing more severe.

"Pleasantry, sir? You *know*, while you say it, that I speak in agony!" murmured Agnes Marlyn. "Were your worst conjecture true, and I the wretch you suppose, still, in this murder, have I not sustained the loss of all a wicked woman's ambition? Pleasantry, indeed! you don't think it: you can't think it: you don't believe in that any more than you do in the rest. The whole thing is a monstrous affectation!"

"Pray, what have I charged you with?" said Shadwell, turning sharply on her.

There was a silence. He laughed, and went on:

"Come, come, Miss Marlyn! you are not the first clever young lady I have met. I know something of the world, though I do live at Raby. No, no—it won't do."

And he laughed again.

She frowned a little suddenly, and said:

"I can prove my innocence; I can prove more."

Shadwell shrugged, and, with a sneer, repeated the hackneyed distych:

> "He that's convinced against his will,
> Is of the same opinion still."

"Then it's vain pleading with you?" she said, imploringly.

"Quite," answered he, dryly.

"You don't and you won't believe one word I say?" she repeated, in agonized tones.

"Just so; I don't and I won't believe one word you say," he repeated, with insulting slowness, "and pray let that suffice."

He turned to the chimney-piece, to choose a cigar among those he had laid there: a signal to Miss Marlyn that he would be left to himself.

She raised her head and her eyes, and for a moment there gleamed on him a baleful light; her hand was raised from the door-handle; she was on the point of speaking, but refrained. The pale lips were silent; the gleam and the frown disappeared. Her eyes were lowered again, and her fingers once more hesitatingly touched the brass handle of the door.

"I'm going to light this cigar, Miss Marlyn, but not till you have quite done and gone away. I don't mean to hurry you, if you have got any thing more to say."

He paused, with the cigar in his fingers.

"I must make, then, before I go," she said, in a tone of melancholy, and with a deep sigh, "one confidence—one last confidence; and, even here, it must be *whispered*. Judge me by it."

As she spoke the color receded from her face, and her tones became so strange, that Shadwell returned her gaze with something of excitement, while, quitting her place by the door, with quick, light steps, she crossed suddenly to the hearth, and stood nearly before him, looking in his face.

Shadwell returned her gaze with an involuntary frown, but lowered his eyes.

She drew nearer—a little nearer still, laid her

hand upon his shoulder, and whispered for a few moments in his ear.

With a sound like a short laugh, he raised his face suddenly. But there was no smile there. It was distorted, and like a face of grey stone looking at her from the shadow. For a few seconds this apparition remained perfectly fixed. His hand was stretched toward her, and without a word, Mark Shadwell staggered backward, and would have fallen upon the floor, but that, luckily for him, the chair in which he had been sitting received him.

When he opened his eyes, Miss Marlyn was still there. She was standing near, and looked pale and frightened. He got up with a shudder, and stood looking at her, unable for a time to get together the antecedents of this odd situation.

He soon did recover it, and sat down in silence, like a broken-hearted man.

The color had now returned to her cheeks with a more brilliant glow, and she stood before him, with downcast eyes, like a beautiful penitent who has just made a shrift of shame.

Mark Shadwell drew a long breath, and groaned.

"Why should it trouble you so? I have made my confession, and now you understand me: you will suspect your secretary no more. Poor Agnes Marlyn has told her sorrowful secret to none but one living creature. Now you know me—my courage, my constancy. Deal how you may—severely or compassionately—with me; you now at least know me, and will think of me, more lowly perhaps, but more highly too. I am reckless, but also true. Farewell, sir!"

And, with one sad, fiery look of reproach, she left him.

As the door closed, Mark followed, and stood irresolutely, with the handle in his fingers. Perhaps he was on the point of recalling her. He hesitated for a moment, and then slowly turned away.

His ideas of the situation—his ideas of Miss Marlyn's character—had undergone a rather awful change.

CHAPTER. LVII.

MISS BARBARA VISITS RABY.

Next day no one could have told from the air or looks of these two persons that any thing unusual had occurred. Neither was there any outward sign of renewed confidence or amity between them.

The only event which happened was the arrival of Miss Barbara Temple, driven over in a curious little ancient gig, by Charles Mordaunt, from the vicarage, to pay a visit to Mrs. Shadwell, and to persuade her to pass a few days with them, by way of interrupting a monotony which recent events had rendered unusually gloomy.

The indolence, or that which seems so, that accompanies ill-health, and habitual depression of spirits, however, prevented her accepting the invitation. The world—her little world—did not perceive it, but the apathy was that of a chronic despair—the sense of an insurmountable unfitness.

"I'm so sorry I can't persuade you; a few days' change of scene and air would do wonders for you. I don't know, my dear, how you have lived through the last terrible month," said Miss Barbara. "We have been, I assure you, all wonder, and pity, and I may say, admiration."

"Oh, my dear Barbara!" answered Mrs. Shadwell, "I wish I could take credit for the courage you all attribute to me. I'm afraid I have been, on the contrary, a great coward."

"Quite the contrary—a heroine, Amy; but you must not overdo it. As I often say to dear Stour, exertion must be recruited by repose, and the nerves must not be kept always on a stretch. It is not in nature to bear it, and—I hope you won't think it rude—for this, you know, is a magnificent place and park—quite a regal thing—and the house is so grand; but, just for that reason—now you won't be offended—it is, I always thought, a little gloomy; and, just now, after all that has so recently happened, you must find it quite awful staying here; at least, my dear, it is quite out of the question, your spirits getting up. Well, now, won't you think of it? *Do* come."

But, no; it was vain pressing the point.

"Well, now, I don't know what I'm to do or say; I shall appear so selfish, I'm afraid. But, I was so sure of you, that when I met Miss Marlyn in the hall—what a charming young person she is!—I ventured to invite her, intending that you, Rachel and she should come altogether, and stay a day, or a week, or a month, as you found it pleasant; and she seemed so pleased, and said so prettily, if you would permit her; and then—what shall I say about Rachel? I haven't seen her yet; but I should feel such a brute, asking them both to come away, just when you can least spare them."

"My dear Barbara, I should be so delighted; just for a day or two. Young people require a little change, and, of course, this place is very dull for poor little Rachel; and, as you say, particularly now. I should not miss her for that time, and I know it would do her so much good."

"Well, a thousand thanks! I know I am detestably selfish, but I can't help it, and I am so much obliged. Can you let them come to-morrow? I should have asked leave to take them away with me to-day, but our dear Bonnie—Roger, you know—who is the life and soul of our little party, does not return till to-morrow, and you have no idea how *he* would feel it," she added, archly.

"Well, dear, arrange it exactly as you like; only you'll allow them to return in a day or two; for, I confess, I shall miss Rachel, though I am delighted that she should go to you. It will make her so happy, poor little thing, and do her so much good."

And, this point settled, the two ladies entered into a very interesting conversation about Sir Roke Wycherly and the miserable Carmel Sherlock, with their heads very near together, as they sat by the fire in Mrs. Shadwell's room up stairs.

In the mean time Charles Mordaunt was very happy, for in the hall he had met Rachel. I can not say what they talked about, but I am sure it was as interesting as the conversation between the two elder ladies up stairs, for they talked rather low—and a great deal pleasanter, for they laughed now and then.

The cob stood under the gig, in view, before

the steps, without evincing impatience, which was fortunate, as there was no one to stop him if he had chosen to run away, and I doubt whether Mr. Mordaunt would have perceived the occurrence, if he had done so. Rachel, who had just returned from a solitary little ramble, had on her coat and hat—and a very becoming little hat it was. She was to have come in to practice the overture to "Cenerentola" with Agnes Marlyn, who by this time was waiting for her; but neither of the young people in the hall appeared to remember their business, until, on a sudden, Miss Marlyn entered the hall from a side door.

As she exchanged greetings with Mordaunt, Miss Marlyn looked oddly and steadily at him for a moment.

"I saw Miss Temple as she went up stairs," she said, "and she was so kind as to ask me to the vicarage. She intends having us all together—your mamma, and you, and me too. It is so very kind," said Miss Marlyn.

"Oh, yes," said Rachel. "I am certain it would do her ever so much good. I do hope she'll come."

"Oh, she *must*," said Charles. "She could not think of disappointing all her friends at the vicarage so miserably."

Just at this period Miss Barbara came down the stairs, and spoke to Rachel, and told her what was settled, and that they were to come next day; and this little leave-taking over, she and Mordaunt got into their queer little vehicle and drove away.

Miss Barbara Temple's head was still full of the awful details which she had just been discussing with Mrs. Shadwell, and, as often happens in this sort of preoccupation, there was a certain gloom and constraint in her manner, as she nodded again to Miss Marlyn, which impressed that young lady very unpleasantly.

Full of the anticipated visit, the young ladies lay down that night to sleep. Very differently framed, however, were these anticipations. Miss Agnes Marlyn expected neither amusement nor pleasure, but she did expect in the little drama which she had nearly resolved on producing, to make my friend Roger Temple fill a *rôle* which might turn out to be a rather important one.

That evening, after dusk, Miss Marlyn knocked at the study door, and being told to enter, found Mark Shadwell there, as usual, moping in solitude.

Mark darted a glance, in which was a good deal of suspicion and alarm, at the young lady.

"I have called, sir," she said, very timidly, "to know whether I can be of any use in copying and writing letters, that is if, during the remainder of my stay at Raby, you will permit me still the duties of my old office of secretary?'

"It is very good of you, Miss Marlyn," said he, breaking into a doubtful smile. "I'll think of it; that is, if you really wish it."

"You don't doubt my sincerity, Mr. Shadwell?"

"You are an enthusiast," he almost whispered, but with a pained and averted look. "I say I'll think of it, but at present there is nothing."

He extended his hand; she advanced with a beautiful but strange confusion, and timidly placed her fingers in it. He held them for some moments, looking at her half-averted features, as if he was on the point of speaking. But he did not. He opened his hand, and hers was liberated, and she instanly left the room.

About the same time at the vicarage, leaning back in his chair, with the slight pallor and listlessness in his face that betokens fatigue, the Rev. Stour Temple, his feet on the fender, was sipping that second glass of sherry which was the measure of his after-dinner wine.

Miss Barbara had come in to chat with him, as she always did when he came in late and tired to his dinner.

"I paid poor Amy a little visit to-day," she said.

"And found her pretty well, I hope?" he asked.

"Not very well; and she could talk of almost nothing but that dreadful business, you know. You must take another glass of sherry, Stour, darling; you look so tired—you shan't refuse."

"Hadn't I better take this first?" he said, with a smile. "Impetuous darling—my ministering spirit," he said, patting the back of her thin hand with a very caressing gentleness.

"You don't take care of yourself, Stour, and you know if you overwork yourself, and won't take nourishment, you must simply be worn out."

"Well, darling, we'll see when I have done this; and tell me, has any thing more been heard of the wretched man who is in prison—Carmel Sherlock?"

"Nothing; and you remember our little plan, two months ago, before all these horrors were dreamed of?"

"What was it?" asked Stour.

"To invite Mrs. Shadwell, and Rachel, and Miss Marlyn here for a week," said she.

"Oh!" said the vicar; "and have you?"

"Yes," she said, a little surprised at his manner, and paused, looking at the grave look which he was directing, over his knees, into the fire.

"And have they refused?"

"Amy can't come, but Rachel and Agnes Marlyn are coming to-morrow."

She saw, as she said this, in the vicar's dark face, the slight contraction which marks a sudden annoyance. Still looking into the grate, the vicar swallowed the wine that remained in his glass, and held it out toward his sister, who, glad to be relieved of debate upon this point by his momentary abstraction, replenished it instantly, and that with so honest a bumper that her brother, still ruminating deeply, was obliged to sip a little cautiously before setting it down.

"You are sure they said they were coming, Barbara?"

"Oh, yes; quite certain! Amy said they should; but what is the difficulty, dear?"

"It is very unpleasant; but I could not possibly have Miss Marlyn here," said he.

"Why, my dear Stour, you surprise me!" said Miss Babie, with eyes wide open, and ears also, for she was not deficient in curiosity.

"No, indeed, Barbara, she must not come," he said, very gently, but in that firm tone which experience had taught her there was no gainsaying.

"Not come here, Miss Marlyn, my dear Stour? Why, she has been here fifty times."

"I know all that, dear Babie."

He got up uneasily, and stood with his back to the fire, looking toward the window-curtains, and thinking uncomfortably.

"No, no, it would not do," he repeated, nodding twice or thrice.

"Do you seriously mean, my dear Stour, that we can't have Miss Agnes Marlyn at the vicarage?"

"Quite seriously."

"And what on earth, Stour, can be the reason?" said Babie, also standing up, and expanding her hands in remonstrance.

"You must not mention it to any one. I don't want to prejudice her—you promise, Babie?"

"Yes, certainly," she answered, with the air of one about to hear a secret. But nothing followed.

"What is it I'm not to tell?" she inquired at last, a little impatiently.

"You are not to tell any one, except those who must know, that I said we could not have her here. I have written to make inquiry, and I may hear more favorably than I at present hope; but in the mean time we must not run a risk of injuring a person whom I only suspect."

"I thought you were going to tell me all about it, Stour?" she complained.

"If I can I will, dear, by and by; but don't ask me at present."

"I really think you ought to tell me, I do. What on earth am I to say to her, or to Mrs. Shadwell?"

"It is very awkward, I know, dear Babie; but it is not my fault, and I don't see that my telling you more, just now, would mend the matter."

"And what am I to *say?* I don't want to know, except for that. I should not like to seem rude, you know, and it certainly would seem worse, quite brutal, my giving no reason."

"Yes, indeed, darling, the whole thing is very awkward. I ought to have told you before, not to mind asking Miss Marlyn here, but I forgot. I think I will tell you all about it to-morrow or next day. You may not think it so serious; but I mentioned it to Mark Shadwell, with very strong advice as to how he should act, and our asking her here, and making her an inmate, would be at best an inconsistency, and a very glaring one he would think it."

Miss Barbara looked up at the drapery of the window-curtain, and then down on the carpet near her foot, a little anxiously. She thought that Stour had penetrated Roger's little romance, and did not approve. So she raised her kind grey eyes, and looking in his face earnestly, said—

"You must tell me one thing."

"What is it, Babie?"

"You must tell me, dear Stour, has your reason any thing to do with Bonnie?"

"With Bonnie? No, certainly," said the vicar, in unaffected surprise, followed by an involuntary little laugh. "No, darling, upon my honor! Roger has neither act nor part in the mystery."

Barbara was relieved.

"I wish I knew all about it"—here was a little pause—"I might very possibly be of use in clearing it up if I did"—here was another—"but, as you tell me, I shall by and by"—she concluded, having failed to elicit any thing more from the vicar, "I only want your help for the present, dear Stour, to tell me, what *am* I to say?"

"The simple truth, darling; as, I think, you always do. I don't think you need write to Miss Marlyn, if you don't wish to do so; but just say—put it all upon me—that *I* see an insurmountable difficulty in the way of Miss Marlyn's coming here at present. Mrs. Shadwell may either say so in so many words, or she may keep Miss Marlyn at home on her own authority, without explanation. Of course, you tell Mrs. Shadwell that I, the most impracticable and secret of curmudgeons, refuse you a single gleam of light into the mystery."

In consequence of this little conversation, there went a note that evening, in Barbara Temple's hand, to Raby, which startled Amy Shadwell. There had been afloat in her mind just enough of that unpleasant misgiving which does not amount to suspicion, to give to this enigmatical note a force and augury which made poor Amy's heart sink, and kept it in a dismal flutter all night.

It was not much to have to say to Miss Marlyn that, on second thoughts, she would ask her to stay at Raby. There were fifty natural reasons to account for such a change of plan.

She had a vague terror, however, of its leading to a scene, and she felt that she had neither ability nor spirits for an encounter with that clever young lady, whom she did not quite understand—whom she had liked so much at first, and began now to fear, like one of those persons in a dream who undergo in its progress a gradual and awful transformation, and end by holding us in the spell of a nightmare.

CHAPTER LVIII.

MISS MARLYN TALKS WITH HER BLACK CAT.

Mrs. Shadwell would gladly have got out of this unpleasant task; but one way or other it must be got through; and it was better to dispatch it, than to let it continue to hang over her till next morning.

So she did see Miss Marlyn—who stood, though invited to sit, and listened submissively, in silence, during the few minutes occupied by the little conference. A brighter glow for a moment flushed her cheeks, on hearing that, for some reason which Mrs. Shadwell could not explain, which she approached and went away from, without touching, Miss Agnes Marlyn was not to accompany Rachel to the vicarage next day.

At this point Agnes looked with a keen steady glance for a moment at the lady; who instinctively averted her eyes. Miss Marlyn, however, evinced absolutely no emotion, except in those very trifling evidences.

"Any thing more?" asked Miss Marlyn, in her lowest tone, and with the faintest light of a sad smile.

"No—nothing," said Mrs. Shadwell, who was embarrassed in the presence of the young lady who stood before her, smiling, patient, and so gracefully submissive, that her heart smote her, and she almost wished that Agnes Marlyn had been angry and violent.

It was a relief, however, that this little unpleas-

antness was over, and without giving pain, or exciting an angry thought.

But was this so?

Miss Marlyn ran down stairs lightly to the drawing-room, where she had left Rachel in the middle of a duet.

"Well, Pucelle, what was it?" she asked.

"Nothing, dear, only that I'm not to go with you to-morrow to the vicarage," said Miss Marlyn, quietly, sitting down beside her, and striking a chord.

"And why aren't you coming?"

"I don't know, and I don't care—I forget where we stopped; here, I think."

"Wait, Pucelle—don't mind that tiresome duet—and tell me, are you really not coming?"

"Oh, my dear, don't you know I'm not coming?" said Miss Marlyn, with a smile a little sarcastic and incredulous.

"No—I had not an idea that any thing could happen to prevent it; and I entreat that you won't suppose any thing so treacherous as my hiding it, if I had known, from you."

"Did I fancy any such thing? Why should I, dear? What an odd, fanciful, huffy little creature it is! But, really, it is not worth talking about. I should not care to sojourn in that wearisome little place, and be so be-Bonnied as I was when we last drank tea there; nothing but its comicality makes it endurable, and the fun of the best joke wears out, you know, by repetition; and, in fact, nothing but the hope of some little use as a daisy-picker, could have prevented its being absolutely insufferable. I can't admire even the scenery there. I think it the only uninteresting spot in the country. To be sure there is an object that does make the landscape interesting—I mean Mr. Charles Mordaunt, doesn't he?" and she laughed, and played half a dozen bars, and added: "What a beautiful blush, my dear. I wish he were here to see it."

"Pucelle, you talk like a fool!"

"And I such a rogue?"

"No—but I mean to say, that I can't conceive any girl caring the least for any man who has not first shown that he likes her better than any one else."

"And doesn't he show it? Come, I never ask any one to confess any thing in this hypocritical world, but you know he does; and you know you like him—and now let us play this other overture."

And she began to play so brilliantly, and loud, all the time saying: "No—no—I won't hear; I'll listen to nothing but music;" that Rachel, half provoked, though she could not help laughing, did sit down and play the treble.

"You're not vexed, Pucelle; but I am—very much disappointed—and I shan't half enjoy my visit without you. Are you vexed, Pucelle?"

"I'm never vexed, dear—I'm not even curious—for I know perfectly how this little change of plan came about," said Agness Marlyn, leaning back in her chair, and looking listlessly upward.

"No, dear, it is too long a story; I'll tell it to-night to my little black cat, who sits on the end of my pillow, and hears my complaint whenever I have one to make, and sometimes gives me a tiny bit of advice."

This black cat of Miss Marlyn's—allusion to which in moods of sinister playfulness was not unfrequent—it is right to observe, had no material existence, and was altogether an imaginary confidant.

"I hate that black cat, Pucelle; I wish you'd make it jump out of the window; I don't think it likes us, and I'm afraid of it."

Miss Marlyn laughed gently, with a sidelong glance along the carpet, and the glittering edges of her even teeth appeared with a pretty suggestion of malice, that made her for a moment appear like a stranger to Rachel.

"Part with my dear little black cat, with the yellow eyes, and sage counsel, and patient ears! Ah! no. It is such a little wise-acre, and so sharp, and has heard all my secrets, and is so very old a friend, and only the size of my hand, and never comes except when people use me ill; and then it comes crouching and clawing along my pillow to my ear, rubbing its little whiskers to the sheet, and tumbling so playfully, growling like a dear little tiger, or hissing like a tiny pet snake. You can't imagine such a darling; when I was at school, where old La Chouette used to knock me about as she pleased, even before that, when I was beaten and half-starved at home, from that time it was my solitary confidant—my own dear, little, black rogue—who listened to my poor little whimperings, and—taught me tricks."

Except in this little enigmatical speech, Miss Agnes Marlyn evinced no sense of wrong; and when the hour of rest arrived, she kissed Rachel at her door, and went to her room. She had not to pass Sir Roke's door, but she could see it as she went round the corner of the gallery swiftly, and glanced hastily at it over her shoulder as she quickened her pace. She was not afraid of ghosts, as most young people are. I suppose on occasion, however, she was capable of that kind of fear; but whatever may have been the tricks or menaces of her imagination when she saw that door after dark, I am sure she hated the sight of it.

Hurriedly she shut and locked her door. Her heart was full of bitterness; but she did not burst into tears, as young ladies under a sense of wrong usually do in the seclusion of their rooms. Perhaps the tenderness of early parental love, and the habit of being pitied, are needed to induce that relief, and Agnes Marlyn had no home affections to look back to, and had never enjoyed the luxury of being pitied. And so her training had steeled her against the necessities of sympathy, and the habit even of pitying herself.

Miss Marlyn sat for a moment before her glass, thinking and looking all the time at her reflected features. She liked looking at herself in the glass; and she knew she was beautiful; and she could do that and think also. Her beauty was her power, and the vivid consciousness of this inspired her thoughts, and quickened her sense of insult.

She had sat longer than she thought, and was a little chilly when she stood up to undress. Having gathered up her magnificent hair, her graceful limbs were quickly laid in her bed. She did not put out her candle; she liked thinking in this kind of light, with her small hand under her cheek. Her heart was full. An intense, cold anger was struggling in it, and yearned for some expression in act. She was turning over all sorts of things in her mind—talking, as

her phrase was, with her little black cat. They had a long confidence, and it was late when she put out her candle.

Miss Marlyn was a clever person, and made theories, and often saw farther into millstones than other people. She fancied a change of manners toward her when Miss Barbara had come down that day from her talk with Mrs. Shadwell. Who had brought about that change? and now she was in consequence forbidden to go to the vicarage. Insult upon insult! Cowardly outrage! Very well. She was not a person to be stricken down with a blow of a fan, and walked over. She would talk for a time with her little black cat, and see what was to be done.

Next morning Miss Marlyn came down serene and beautiful, in good spirits even, for she had quite made up her mind, and saw her way a little in advance, distinctly. Up to last night, whatever she might say or write, she had been in a great indecision. A grain of passion had determined the equilibrium, and Miss Marlyn's future, for some chapters to come, was now distinctly written in those tablets of her little brain that retained inscriptions like adamant.

At the appointed hour away went Rachel, Agnes Marlyn standing on the steps, and smiling her farewell. When the sound of the wheels grew faint in the distance, she was still smiling, though looking down musingly, at her little foot, which, on the smooth Caen stone, was beating time, as it were, to the gentle measure of her pleasant thoughts. Then, awakening from them, she looked up at the clear autumnal sky, and abroad over the fair landscape. It was the sun of Austerlitz, the augury of conquest, and she ran in and amused herself with jubilant music, and some spirited marches, on the old piano.

Miss Marlyn read her novel, and took her walk, and sang songs to the jingle of the old instrument, which was abandoned to the wear and tear of practicing; and at the usual hour she repaired to Mrs. Shadwell's room, and was particularly gentle and submissive, and, somehow, engaging. She offered to read to Mrs. Shadwell, who was beginning to relent; won, insensibly, by her melancholy little attentions. Mrs. Shadwell, however, had a long interview pending with old Wyndle, but, fearing that a mere refusal would appear ungracious, she asked Miss Marlyn to come to her for half an hour, by and by, and read a little then, if she still felt disposed. Miss Marlyn pathetically thanked her, and entreated that Mrs. Shadwell would think of some way of making her useful, during the very brief stay that remained to her at Raby.

The evening closed over that gloomy household, and darkness succeeded; and Mrs. Shadwell, looking to the little clock over her chimney-piece, saw that it was half past seven, and remembered Miss Marlyn's promise.

Just then, the door opened roughly, and her husband entered. He looked pale and angry, and came over, silently, to the little table, which was placed beside her, and sat down at it. Then, suddenly, he said—

"What has become of Rachel?"

"She went to-day—I thought you knew—to the Temples, to pay a little visit," she replied.

"Well, she has returned by this time, I suppose?"

"No; she was not to return till to-morrow, or, perhaps, next day."

"Upon my soul, that's being rather cool!"

Mrs. Shadwell looked rather frightened at his angry face.

"I hope I haven't done wrong, Mark," she began.

"You have sent Miss Marlyn with her, of course?"

"No; Miss Marlyn is here."

"Oh! and wasn't she asked?"

"Yes, dear Mark, at first, but that was changed afterward."

"Changed, was it? So she has gone off without her governess," he said.

"But her governess couldn't be of the least use to her there, and you know you said you thought Miss Marlyn was unnecessary; and she's going away," pleaded she.

He stared at her very angrily, the more so, that he was a little puzzled by her very obvious rejoinder.

"Upon my honor! you're growing quite a debater; that's a vastly clever answer, only it don't quite demonstrate the wisdom of sending Rachel off alone, among such a set of muffs, to meet that d—d fellow, Mordaunt; and I don't see what business you had to send my daughter away on such a visit without acquainting me with it."

"But, Mark, dear, don't you remember that you told me that I might always send Rachel there without troubling you about it?"

"I say, having asked Miss Marlyn, as the proper person to accompany her, it was insufferingly impertinent withdrawing that invitation; it strikes me, if she is good enough company for you and Rachel, that Mr. Roger Temple, and Charles Mordaunt, and old Miss Barbara might venture to sit in the same room with her. Have you heard any thing against her? I should be glad to know the pretext on which we are to be treated with that kind of insult. And recollect the effect such a snub, from such a quarter, must have upon the position of that young lady, in whom you professed such an interest, and whom, I think, we are bound to protect, not only from common wants and dangers, while she stays here, but from damned impertinence and slander."

He thundered the last words, actually pale with anger.

"But, Mark, dear," she faltered, "there has not been a word said."

"Yes, that's the odious cowardice of the thing, don't you see; there's always a risk of being exposed and punished if one does say lies of people; and don't you perceive that the work is just as effectually done, and far more safely, by letting the world know that the vicar and his family won't let a given young lady into their house, and decline to sit in the room with her? Do you think it fair to Miss Marlyn that we should allow that? I don't, I can tell you, and I'll write to give them my opinion of it, and Rachel shall come home to-night." And with these ominous words he rose, lowering, and stalked from the room, shutting the door, with more emphasis than beseemed the chamber of an invalid.

There are two doors to Mrs. Shadwell's morning-room: one through which Mark had come and gone, opening on the great gallery; the other

from a small anteroom, which communicates with a back gallery.

As Mrs. Shadwell sat there stunned and frightened, this latter door opened, and Miss Marlyn, with a book in her hand, entered. Mrs. Shadwell was in tears. Miss Marlyn's smile vanished—she stood still.

"Pray, come here, Miss Marlyn, and sit down," sobbed Mrs. Shadwell, vehemently, forgetting the coldness and reserve of the last week, in her agitation. "Now, I ask you, Miss Marlyn, have I slandered you—have I? Have I ever slandered you, or permitted any one to slander you?"

"Oh, dear Mrs. Shadwell! I could not imagine such a thing!" exclaimed that beautiful young lady, much shocked, apparently. "Slander me—slander any one! Utterly impossible!"

"Mr. Shadwell has been here, so amazed about that little visit to the Temples, and your not having gone with Rachel."

"Oh, dear Mrs. Shadwell! How very provoking; you have no idea how much I prefer being here, and you know I should have only been in the way there, and I should not have liked it at all; and I know they have not much room, for Mr. Mordaunt is staying there."

"And Mr. Shadwell is so vexed, and he is going to write, and to send for Rachel to-night; and so, I suppose, we shall lose the only friends that are left to us."

"But if you were to ask Mr. Shadwell not to write, surely he would not."

"Mr. Shadwell is very kind, so kind, you have no idea; but he is very firm, and when he thinks a thing right to be done, nothing ever moves him, he always does it, and I am very sorry—"

And Mrs. Shadwell broke down again, and when she looked up Miss Marlyn was gone.

In less than ten minutes more Agnes Marlyn returned, flushed, radiant, and so beautiful! She had prevailed with Mr. Shadwell, the letter would not be written, nor Rachel sent for, nor the arrangement with the Temples disturbed.

It was running so rapidly up the stairs that made the rise and fall of her dress show her quickened breathing, and that called that brilliant color to her cheeks, which seemed to give a fiery softness to her eyes. Her words and tones were very humble; those eyes were cast down. There was the modest gratification of having done her benefactress a little service: a very timid pleasure and an indescribable pleading sadness in her tones and attitude. And along with all this—imperceptible by all but that marvelous organ, the eye of a wife—was there not the baleful light of an insufferable triumph?

Ten million-fold rather at that moment would poor Amy have accepted all the vexation that threatened than been so rescued. She recognized the extraordinary beauty of that girl. She felt, with a deep-seated agony, how facile had been her influence where she, even in better days, had failed to persuade. Like other foolish wives she worshiped the beauty and fascinations of a husband whom other people saw as he was, and she thought him irresistible.

"In black mourn I,
All fears scorn I.
Love hath forlorn me,
Living in thrall.
Heart is bleeding,
All help needing,
Oh, cruel speeding!
Fraughted with gall."

With a heart wounded and resentful, she yet contrived to smile and thank her. She praised her reading, the meaning of which never reached her wandering thoughts, and heard the cadences of that sweet voice that stirred her heart with the anguish of jealousy.

When Agnes Marlyn had bade her good-night, and departed, she looked in the glass with a pang, her retina still glowing with the radiant beauty that had just left the room. There met her the plaintive, faded little face, whose glory was over, and the large eyes, still beautiful, and to which, as she looked, the tears sprang. "Amy! Amy!" she murmured, slowly and sadly, with a mournful little shake of her head. All at once the change of years came up before her—the sense of the flight of her power—its irrecoverable loss—and the wild uncertainty of future times.

CHAPTER LIX.

CARMEL SHERLOCK IN HIS NEW ABODE.

That evening, so unhappy at Raby, was passing very pleasantly for Rachel at the vicarage.

Barbara Temple had made, as she supposed, two people very happy. But, alas!—there were two others. Poor Roger was now, six o'clock P.M., expected momentarily, and disappointment awaited him.

Miss Barbara grew silent and nervous as the hour approached, and when Roger's fly drew up at the door, she actually grew pale, as she ran out to the hall to meet him.

"Oh! Bonnie, darling, I'm so glad, and you're looking so beautiful—such a color!"

"Now, Babie, you rogue, you're at your old tricks—trying to make me conceited," panted Bonnie, with a laugh of fond gratification.

"But I do say, Bonnie, your color is just what it was when you were nine years old—quite beautiful!" repeated Babie, in a rapture, and still out of breath from the hug she had bestowed on him.

"I'm glad I'm looking so young—or—so well, I mean," said Roger, in an under-tone, smiling delighted. "It's just the little breeze—the air: and—and, hadn't I better run up and get off these things?" he added; and she knew, by the wandering of his honest little blue eyes toward the drawing-room door, whom he was thinking of, and with a pang she suddenly recollected.

"Oh! Bonnie, dear! I forgot—how shall I tell you?" she exclaimed, suddenly looking in his face quite woe-begone.

"Good gracious! She isn't ill—is she?" he exclaimed.

"Oh! no—not ill; but she's not here," said Babie, looking in his face as if she expected him to burst into tears.

"Oh! and they haven't come, after all?" murmured Bonnie, in a dismal tone of disappointment.

"Only Rachel, dear; Mrs. Shadwell couldn't come, and Miss Marlyn remained with her at Raby," said Babie, with a little indirectness.

She saw that Bonnie was in despair, though his faded smile still rested on his face.

"Well, Babie; another time," he said, with a dismal hopefulness.

"Oh! yes—let us hope—let us hope!" exclaimed kind Barbara, evasively.

Honest Roger made a tedious toilet, and sat long over his fire. When he entered the pleasant, old-fashioned little drawing-room, his brother Stour had come in, and Doctor Sprigge, who was of their little dinner-party; and he and the vicar were chatting with Miss Barbara quite cozily by the fire.

With that affinity which acts so irresistibly, Roger's eye instantly found Rachel, associated as she was with the absent Agnes Marlyn, and he drew near and greeted pretty Miss Shadwell, and turned away, with a melancholy yearning, to shake hands with the doctor and the vicar; and then to take Barbara's hand and pat it, and look sadly into her eyes; and, with a little sigh, he told her how very cold the wind was over Higmore Heath this evening.

"Ay, that's the place to catch it," said the doctor, overhearing him. "That moor's worth fifty pounds a year to me, in bronchitis and things of that kind. Any thing of an east wind comes down through the break in the mountains—like a funnel—and sweeps Higmore. I never felt any thing like it. You're all right here?"

And the doctor touched Roger's ample chest with a privileged poke with the top of his finger.

"All right there?" repeated Roger, whose attention had been wandering. "Ah! ha!—you rogue!" he murmured, with a sad smile and a shake of the head which the doctor did not understand.

"Roger," said Miss Barbara, getting up hastily, "I forgot to show you—come to the window—you must do something to the poor Persian lilac; the best branch was broken last night in the storm. See, Bonnie—isn't it a pity?"

Bonnie gazed.

"Yes, indeed; so it is," he answered, and a sigh followed.

"Why do you look so sad, Bonnie, darling?" she whispered

"Sad? No; I was only thinking what a lucky fellow Charlie Mordaunt is!"

"Yes, Bonnie, dear, but other people will be lucky too—and happy; all that's wanted is just a little patience."

"Do you think—do you think she'll come tomorrow?" whispered Roger, holding Barbara's hand.

"I can't say, dear. I'm afraid not."

"She wasn't ill—you're sure?"

"Oh, no! quite well; and she seemed delighted at the idea of coming—I assure you she did. She looked so—so beautiful, and pleased."

"Did she—did she, really? Babie, you're a darling; you always see every thing."

"And, I'm sure, she was much more disappointed than you are. I'm certain she's looking out from the window over Wynderfel Wood, in this direction, at this moment. I can picture her to myself—looking and sighing," said romantic Barbara.

"Ah! I'm afraid not, Babie dear. No—no! I dare say she does not care—she doesn't care much, at least. Do you really think she does?" sighed Roger, and pressed her hand again.

And Babie patted the back of his sunburnt paw with tender compassion, and a great misgiving at her heart, which she dared not tell him.

And Babie would have gone on romancing, and Roger listening to her delightful dreams, heaven knows for how long, had not the maid just at that moment popped in at the door, to tell them that dinner was ready; so, with another great sigh, and a grateful pressure of Babie's hand, Roger in haste took his place and followed in the wake of more important people, beside Charles Mordaunt, whom, as they went, he patted gently on the shoulder, saying—"Glad to see you again, old-fellow!"

For all but my good friend Roger, that quiet evening glided very pleasantly into the past. There was talking—old recollections and new stories. There was the merry, and sometimes plaintive, jingle of the old piano. There were songs, and one duet, which Miss Barbara encored—remarking, in a pleased aside to Stour, how charmingly their voices went together; so Rachel and Mordaunt sang it over again, and were much applauded, even by Roger, who remembered Miss Marlyn's voice in that duet, beside the same piano, and who for her sake sighed also an encore.

"Poor Stour!" exclaimed Miss Barbara, next morning at breakfast. "Not content with his own work, which, I do assure you, is nearly killing him, he has promised Mr. Clarke, who is in such affliction, you know, to visit for him, two days in the week, at Applebury prison; and so he's gone off, with an early breakfast, and we shan't see him now, I suppose, till dinner-time, or perhaps later."

And so it was. Stour was by this time visiting the "spirits in prison," so few of whom care to be preached to—in a prison not of common locks and masonry only—spirits imprisoned in the iron cage of evil education and habits, and screwed down, as Andersen says, each "under the coffin-lid of his connections."

"The prisoner named Carmel Sherlock," said Stour to the prison officer, when he had made the round of the wards, "not a convict—only committed for trial—who, you tell me, has refused to see the chaplain, would, I think, see me. I've known him for a long time, and take a deep interest in the unhappy man; and I would be so glad to see him, if he would admit my visit. Will you ask him?"

The man returned—Sherlock would be glad to see him. So the vicar walked down the flagged corridor and entered the small square room, where the thin figure of Carmel Sherlock met him.

Sherlock looked thinner, and his black hair was longer, but his pale face showed no change in expression, and no altered lines of suffering.

"I am glad, Mr. Sherlock, you have admitted me; I could not leave this place without asking whether you would see me," said the vicar.

"Thanks, yes; and how are the family at Raby?" said Sherlock, fixing his earnest eyes on him.

"All quite well," answered the vicar.

"Mr. Shadwell?" the prisoner inquired.

"Yes."

"And Mrs. Shadwell?"

"Always an invalid, you know; but not worse than she has been for some time."

"And Miss Rachel?"

"Quite well."

"Quite well," he echoed, mournfully; "and happy—ay, happy?"

"I am here, you know," said the vicar, after a pause, "as a clergyman—doing duty for the chaplain."

"Ah! yes, as a clergyman—and no doubt making many people happier—but that is not for me. You see God in your printed Bible, Mr. Temple, and I, in the pictured pages of his Creation; and my ideas and yours are different."

"My dear Mr. Sherlock, all this trouble has not, I hope, befallen you in vain. Surely you reflect on your present situation."

"That, sir, is all fair—yes, sir: the bitter for the sweet; the darkness for the light; a balanced account, with small profit or loss to any, when it is closed. When you come into a family you must accept their rules; and being born into the world, you are the *οἰκέτης* of the great house, and taste of its good cheer and also of its *horribile flagellum*. So it is, sir, I am here. You think it just; and if killing be always murder, it is just. And there is the weakness of the Bible. It makes you, don't you see, the slave of a few generalities; but I discriminate. Which is more spiritual? You call all the immortal sights and voices that are about us, fancies proceeding from our own perishable brains; but I perceive, and consider them, as belonging to God's outer household of immortal spirits."

The vicar answered nothing. He was looking down, disappointed. He ought to have remembered, he thought, how mad this wretched man was. He was but throwing the good seed into a deep and barren sea.

"Sir Roke Wycherly, what was he? Ay, he came at the behest of others. Why should that hoary old goat haunt the house when there was so short an exorcism? Your evangelists and apostles were wiser than you, Mr. Temple. They knew the unclean spirits by the sense that was given them. They believed in demons, because they knew the signs of their tenancy, and saw that they fought murderously against expulsion—ay, ay—with some of them, any thing for a body—any thing for a body—the tenement of clay, the mechanism of sense. They did it with a spell: 'Thou unclean spirit, come out of him.' I was told to cast him out another way."

"Pray," said the vicar, peremptorily, "say nothing to me that may commit you upon the question of your innocence. I must not be made partaker in any secret which I ought not to keep."

Carmel Sherlock's dark eyes glared askance on him a look of suspicion, and then dropped to the floor. In silence he ruminated; and then, with a sigh, he looked up and said—

"To a man who has always liked solitude, this kind of thing," and he waved his fingers slightly toward the wall, "has nothing formidable; and to one who has lost all but life, death looks friendly. I miss the picture, now and then, once in an hour; once in a day, once in a night. Sometimes, I would look from my window—I miss Wynderfel—enchanted ground—and the black tarn, in Feltram Glen—Lake Avernus. The spirits! Haunted ground—friendly spirits. They came to know the solitary man who did not fear them—who trusted them; and they sometimes told him things. A star like that the wise men saw, I followed; but mine went out. I miss the Straduarius, that's all. It followed my memory in all its windings, with its own storm and lamentation. You have showed me kindness, now and always, sir, in the same way. Your religion is comfortable to you, and you have wished to make me a partaker in it. No small kindness; and, I never forget a kindness, so I have left you the Straduarius. Mr. Shadwell will have all the rest—the picture, the books, the creese. But to you, for you have music,"—he was looking dreamily at Stour Temple's head, as he might on a phrenologic cast—"that wonderful creation, the Straduarius!"

The vicar, remembering the strange sounds emitted by this same violin, as he stood with Mark Shadwell on the steps at Raby one melancholy night, was very near smiling.

The impulse was but transitory, and with decent gravity he thanked Carmel Sherlock, and hoped that it would be very long before his bequest took effect.

"You are kind, sir, but I shan't leave this new home of mine—this home of stone and iron—alive. The lamp will not be broken—it will go out."

The vicar already regretted his visit. In Carmel Sherlock's enigmatical speeches were hinted revelations which he ought not to hear without divulging.

"I don't quite see your meaning," said Stour Temple, and hesitated. He suspected a covert threat of suicide.

"No, sir," said Sherlock, reading his suspicion with a strange penetration. "I mean that I shall die—die, as you would say, a natural death."

"You are not ill, I hope?"

"Ill? Oh, no! There's no man in England better: an elastic life that adapts itself to all forms of pain, which will bear sudden transition from the hermitage to the camp, and from the camp to the prison, and never feel it. If a man could sell it, sir, there are men who would give a sack of gold for it. But money has its hour like every other thing; and for me it would come too late. Life in one hand, gold in the other, I would drop both into the abyss for one moment's certainty of a thing which never was, that never can be—never, sir; and might be a curse if it came. Haven't you seen celestial faces that changed when you came near? Every one knows what horror is. These transformations. Therefore, sir, it is better to wait for the spiritual world when the essence of things will appear, and into that world I go smiling, having bid my eternal farewell to the illusions of mortality. I go, sir, as I say, smiling, and quite serene; at peace, Mr. Temple, with all the world and with myself; reconciled to the wonderful conditions of the life in which we now are, and expecting confidently those which are sublime!"

The vicar listened to what in his ears sounded like audacious impieties, with eyes cast down and a look of pain; and, shaking his head, he replied—

"Ah! Mr. Sherlock, your faith must repose on something more solid than your own wild theories, and you must have some more satisfactory convictions than the dark retrospect of a life and mind so fancifully preoccupied can offer, to justi-

fy the confidence on which you may reasonably rest."

"Confidence and—curiosity, sir," said Sherlock.

"Well, Mr. Sherlock, you have said things to-day which have made me very anxious. You will not, from curiosity, make a jump, like Empedocles, into the crater?" And the vicar looked on Sherlock as he spoke.

Sherlock smiled, and repeated—

"'Relictâ non bene parmulâ.'

No, sir. If I know myself, I shan't do that."

"If I had found you in a mood, Mr. Sherlock, as you say, from curiosity, if from no other motive, to talk on the one subject which can never lose its interest—I mean the truth revealed in the Bible, which alone can light us through the valley of the shadow of death, to safety—it would have been a great happiness to me."

He paused; but Carmel Sherlock, listening respectfully, with downcast eyes, said nothing.

"You are very good, sir, you are wonderfully good, to care for such a man as I. I can't understand it; I can only thank you from my heart. I was on the point to-day of telling you some things which, as yet, no one knows but myself, and when you checked me, I resolved to postpone. I shall perhaps tell my benefactor, Mr. Shadwell, instead, when he comes. I'm sure he'll come to see me, sir! He'll surely come! and for the rest, sir,—time—time. I have got some old books; you would think them of no value, but they have many deep meanings hidden one under the other, like the wisdom of Brutus or of Hamlet under a mad exterior."

"Then another time, perhaps, you will talk with me more as I could wish?" said Temple.

"Not now—not to-day, sir; perhaps never. But I am very grateful; and will you show me another great kindness—and knowing not in what shape, nor how soon, death may arrive—for I hear only his steps in the air—if it should be with short notice—will you come and see me? There is something which I want to tell Mr. Shadwell—*he* will be glad to hear it—about the death of Sir Roke Wycherly, and if I can't write, and you hear that I am dying, will you come?"

"Certainly; you may rely upon me," answered Temple.

"That is all, sir. I hear the man at the door," said Carmel Sherlock.

Not without extracting a promise, in return, that Sherlock would read a little book which he would send him, did the good vicar take his leave.

"Solitude!" said Sherlock, with a smile, when he found himself alone, casting his Latin folio on the table. "With living comrades like this, with memory, with dreams that come through the golden gate, listeners are never lone. It is your talkers who are lonely. I have ended this romance—so let me go and begin another."

CHAPTER LX.

ROGER TEMPLE LOOKS IN.

While Miss Barbara, with Rachel and Charles Mordaunt, drove to visit the ruins of Elverston Castle, my forlorn friend, Roger Temple, sauntered toward Wynderfel. From the heights beyond the ruined hall, he gazed sadly at the woods and chimneys of Raby, till, unable to resist the yearnings of his love, he trudged slowly on toward the sombre scene of his own romance.

As he approached the house, he began to regret that he had not asked Barbara to give him a message to excuse his visit. He would not go in, however; he would merely inquire at the door, and try his chance. Barbara would, of course, wish to know how Mrs. Shadwell was; and so he would inquire in her name; ay, and if he encountered Mark, he would say that she sent him. Very slowly he walked by the windows of the house, but no sign of life met his eye. Round the corner, along the side of the mansion, he proceeded quite solitarily, and so to the front. The hall door was half open. He hesitated. He heard the well-known sound of the piano accompanying a rich clear voice.

Honest Roger was very near forgetting himself, and on the point of walking into the school-room, whence the music proceeded, unannounced. He recollected himself, however, and rang the bell, while his heart throbbed faster than was comfortable.

The old butler arrived at his leisure, and Roger greeted him in a very friendly way, and told him he had come to give a very particular message for Mrs. Shadwell, which his sister had specially directed him to give to no one but Miss Marlyn.

Roger was now fibbing away quite unscrupulously, which shows how dangerous, even in intention, is the slightest departure from the narrow path of truth. "I think I hear Miss Marlyn at her music in there," he said. "Will you try and let me know whether she can see me for a moment?"

"Oh! that she would," said the servant; and without asking Miss Marlyn's leave, introduced Roger Temple, nothing loth, to her presence.

Miss Marlyn stood up from her music very much surprised, it seemed. Five minutes before, she had not been playing or singing. She was in one of her reveries, talking perhaps with her little black cat, when she saw the top of honest Roger's wide-awake glide by, and, peeping, saw the worthy fellow himself. Thus it happened that the school-room door was opened a very little, and thus it came that the ring of music escaped from the school-room, and was quite audible on the steps of the hall door.

"My sister sent me, and I am so sorry to have interrupted that really heavenly music—quite heavenly!" (A pause and an expressive look occurred here.) "And I am so fortunate—so very fortunate, Miss Marlyn, in having found you at home—so very happy."

"I think you said there was a message?" suggested Miss Marlyn, for another pause had occurred, and Roger seemed to have forgotten every thing but those happy sensations which he described.

"Oh! oh, yes—to ask you particularly how Mrs. Shadwell is this morning?"

"Mrs. Shadwell is just as usual. Shall I run up to give her your message."

"Oh, dear, no! pray, don't think of it—pray don't—merely when you do see her, to be so good as to mention that I called. I heard the delightful music from the steps; I knew very well who the musician must be. No other mu-

sic affects me, Miss Marlyn, like yours—none, upon my honor!"

"It is very good of you to say so, Mr. Temple. You kind people in this part of the world are all so very good to me. I don't know how I shall bear to leave Raby."

"Oh, Miss Marlyn, you must not leave Raby."

"I think I shall leave Raby about this day week. I like Raby. I have grown so fond of it. I think I was formed for a country life," said Miss Marlyn, with a sad little smile that was very pretty, and moved honest Roger extremely.

"I am sure, Miss Marlyn, you have not an idea how some of us will miss you—how awfully—how really awfully!"

Miss Marlyn laughed a little.

"There's one, at least, Miss Marlyn—there's some one—one I could name; there is, indeed, and I don't know what he should do—what would become of him—"

Here there was a pause, and poor Roger looked unspeakable things. He ought to have considered that he was making a rather awkward silence for Miss Marlyn.

"You left Miss Temple quite well, I hope, and Rachel?" she said.

"Yes, quite, thanks—quite well. They went to see Elverston Castle; but I couldn't—I couldn't indeed. I couldn't come anywhere but in this direction. I was so low—so very unhappy. It was such a disappointment your not coming yesterday,—and my sister admires and likes you so much. You have no idea—we all do, and—and—oh! I wish I could tell you half what I feel. I wish, Miss Marlyn, I dare. I—I think you so beautiful, and—and so glorious—an angel of beauty and of goodness!" he rhapsodized, quoting a phrase unconsciously from one of the old novels in Miss Barbara's book-case. "I can't tell you half—only, I can think of no one else—of nothing else. I quite worship you. There's nothing on earth I would not give just to hear you say you could ever like me. I—I have talked it all over a hundred times with dear Babie, and—and she would be so delighted, and we could live with them so pleasantly. I have four hundred a year of my own; and—and—you like the country so; and oh, dear! how happy we should be, and—and—for God's sake, don't say, 'No!'"

Perhaps it struck Miss Maryln at the moment, that, all things considered, the thing was worth considering. If for a clever, friendless, beautiful girl like her there were some brilliant prizes, there were also dismal blanks. But she was ambitious and enterprising, and for such a spirit mere safety has no very distinct attractions.

While some vague calculations were rolling in her mind, my friend Roger, in his rapture of entreaty, had seized her hand in both his, and was pressing it, and pressed it, even, tremblingly, two or three times to his lips. I suppose there was some little decent show of withdrawal! Miss Marlyn was standing with her back toward the door, and toward it also and toward her, honest Roger's bald head was presented as he made his hurried adorations. It was a very marked change in the expression of his face as he raised it, that caused her to look round as she withdrew her hand quickly.

They both saw Mark Shadwell standing there. There was an awkward pause for a moment, during which Miss Marlyn glided from the room.

"I just came in," he said, "Miss Marlyn, to say that my wife, I think, wished to say a word to you,—how do you do, Temple?—but I suppose there's no great hurry.—You've had a walk across by Wynderfel, I suppose, or did you ride?"

"Oh! I—I walked," said Roger, not quite clear for a moment how he had come there. "I—yes, I walked. It is so beautiful; so—so very pretty."

"Yes, very pretty," acquiesced Mark, with a slight sarcasm, which helped to confound his confusion farther.

"It is, indeed; sometimes quite irresistible," floundered poor Roger.

"Ha!" acquiesced Mark, cynically. "All your people quite well at the vicarage, I hope?" said Mark.

"Oh! perfectly; thanks—thanks."

"Won't you come to the drawing-room, and sit down, and have a talk?"

"No—well, no—I believe not," said Roger.

"Can I do any thing for you?" continued Mark.

"Any thing for me—any thing? Oh, no! many thanks. There's nothing—only, merely—nothing, in fact, but my sister, who wished me to inquire how Mrs. Shadwell is to-day."

"Very kind of her. She's pretty much as usual," said Mark.

"Oh! yes, thanks — I've heard; and now they'll be looking for me back again. What splendid timber you have here, to be sure! and the walk over Wynderfel—one's led on."

"Yes, one's led on," repeated Mark.

"One never perceives the distance," and Roger coughed a little. "I'm detaining you."

"Only too glad to see you," said Mark, affecting his ordinary manner on a sudden, though he felt very odd and very sore. "Any news of that poor fellow, Sherlock?"

"No, nothing since, except that he is quite well," said Roger, trying to recover himself; "that little hurt was not of any consequence; and—and—that's all; and I think I must be off, they'll wonder what has become of me," and flushed and nervous, Roger took his leave on the door-steps, and whistled for his dog, and remembered he had not brought him with him, and took leave again.

With a sour and rather malicious smile, Mark stood for a time on the steps, and turned briskly and walked into the house, whistling. He stopped in the hall—

"Where's Miss Marlyn?" he inquired, rather sharply, of the old butler.

"Haven't seen her, sir."

"Well, have her made out, and tell her I'd thank her very much to bring me to the library Mr. Smithwick's letter which she said she would be so good as to copy the other day."

And Mark walked into his room, and shut the door with a sharp emphasis.

CHAPTER LXI.

MISS MARLYN EXPLAINS.

A TAP came to that door speedily, and, in obedience to his call, Miss Marlyn entered. She had some papers in her hand.

"Oh? thanks. This is the letter—Mr. Smithwick's—that you were so good as to say you'd copy?"

"Yes, sir."

"A thousand thanks!"

He took the papers to the window, pretending to read them. Miss Marlyn's glance read his countenance, and she was pleased.

"So very nicely copied, I ought to be very grateful, indeed," he said, laying the papers down. "By the bye, I ought to apologize, shouldn't I, for having disturbed you just now, at a very critical moment?"

Miss Marlyn made no reply.

"My handsome friend, Roger Temple, has withdrawn. I almost pitied him, not for his agitation, but getting over that hill at Wynderfel will blow him so; poor fellow, he was so hot! and this is any thing but a hot day. He ought to make his excursions in a palanquin—do tell him."

"Is there any thing more for me to copy?" asked Miss Marlyn.

"Oh! you are very good—too good. But is it quite fair to Temple, to ask you to take all this trouble for me? He may think it a great impertinence; and it is rather dangerous, doctors say, putting a fat man in a passion."

Miss Marlyn here appeared a little offended.

"If there is any thing more, Mr. Shadwell, perhaps you will send it to the school-room?"

"Oh! I'm not going to let you off so. Don't go just for a moment; no, pray don't."

Miss Marlyn stopped.

"You know how I am placed here. I think I ought to know what passes," said Mark Shadwell, with a cold sort of decision, and at the same time, perhaps, a little embarrassed.

He closed the door, and then added—

"What was that fellow saying?"

Miss Marlyn looked down upon the ground in a beautiful confusion, embarrassed for words to begin. She seemed on the point of speaking, but failed.

"Does he want to marry you? there's nothing to hide. It may be ridiculous, but *you'll* not be laughed at," persisted Mark. "Come, you know I ought to hear. Did he ask you to marry him?"

"Yes," said Miss Marlyn, faintly, "he did."

There was a short silence. Mark Shadwell felt very oddly; but he did not show it in his looks.

"And, I suppose, he has had an answer?"

"No, sir."

"Indeed? I'm afraid I came in, as I said, at a critical time; but there's pen and ink, and you may write your answer now, if you like," said Shadwell. "Don't you think it's a sort of question that requires an answer?" He paused with his open hand indicating the table on which lay paper, pens and envelopes.

"Oh! Mr. Shadwell, what shall I say?"

"Really, Miss Marlyn, you are the best judge of that," said he dryly.

"I mean how shall I express it."

"I don't think young ladies usually have much difficulty in finding words," he said, with a sour smile. "Of course you have made up your mind?"

"How?" said the young lady, raising her deep dark eyes suddenly to his and dropping them again.

"How can I tell? I can't say the least. Only it's a case for 'yes' or 'no;' and, I suppose, you know which you mean to say."

"I shall never marry," she said, still looking down.

"Come, come, you don't mean that," said he.

"Yes, Mr. Shadwell, I shall never marry," she repeated, very low.

"Well," said he, oddly relieved, "I'm not surprised at your being a little *difficile;* if you were not, considering all you are, you would be the most foolish girl in the world."

"I shall never marry, sir. I've quite made up my mind."

"Made up your mind, have you? And for how long, you wise little woman, have you been of that way of thinking?"

"Sir, it is not worth talking about."

"Madam, it is very well worth talking about. Seriously, I take an interest in you—I should be a brute if I did not—a deep interest. I am too deeply obliged—too deeply grateful."

He paused suddenly; he had taken her hand in both his.

The histrionic element was strong in Miss Marlyn. When she played a part, she entered, as the phrase is, thoroughly into it. Miss Bateman grows pale in *Leah*, Miss O'Neil used to shed real tears in *Jane Shore*. It is not easy for a looker-on to define the point of insincerity, or to say exactly where mere imitation kindles into veritable emotion. This I know, that as Mark Shadwell gazed he saw the soft carmine mount to her cheeks; but she did not raise her eyes, and he saw only their long, soft, black lashes.

"Don't you intend consulting any one?" said Mark, hardly understanding why he said this.

"Oh, no, sir!"

"Well, I have no right to ask why, and certainly, about Roger Temple, he *is* such a fool, and so ridiculous—such a figure."

"He's very good, and very kind, and I am very grateful," she began.

"I never heard that he was particularly good or kind, or any thing but fat, which is often taken, I remark, for those qualities; but if you think him all that, perhaps you will reconsider the question."

Mark Shadwell spoke a little bitterly, which pleased Agnes Marlyn, as she looked down with an unchanged blush on the carpet.

He had dropped her hand for a moment, but he took it again, and said in a lower tone—

"Do you mean to think over that question?"

"No," she said, very low again.

"And why, '*no?*'" he said.

"Because—because I shall never marry any one whom I can not love; that is to say, I shall never marry."

"How can you tell," he said, after a pause, "that you might not come to like him very well?"

"I never could love him," she said, with kindling audacity, "you know, Mr. Shadwell, I never could. Nor should I ever marry any

one to whom I dared not and could not trust the dearest and most awful secret of my life, for whom I could not incur danger, disgrace and death itself, and think it martyrdom and glory!"

He felt her hand tremble, and she drew it toward her; but he held it still between his own. She turned away. He thought she was weeping. Was he imposed upon by coarse theatricals, or had he just witnessed a genuine burst of those passions which stir most men so deeply. Was he the possible man after all? Was all the wild worship of this adoring and terrible soul for him?

"*You* are capable of loving; you are a heroine, Agnes," he almost whispered.

"I have been talking wildly; do pray release my hand, Mr. Shadwell. It was your strange advice that made me say all that. Do pray forget it."

"I'll *never* forget it!" he said, still holding her fast. "I now understand you; I have been conjecturing, and guessing, and mistaking for months, but one moment of excited feeling has revealed you—generous, impulsive, daring, true."

"Pray speak of me no more—think of me no more. I shall soon have gone, leaving behind me no trace, but carrying with me my ineffaceable recollections and miseries."

"If it had been my fate, Agnes, to meet with sympathies like yours, that fate would have been different, and *I* a better man."

"I think I have now told you all, Mr. Shadwell, that you said I was bound to tell," she said, a little proudly and coldly; "and although you have spoken so kindly, sir, I yet feel that I have said a great deal that was very foolish, and, from my heart, I wish it all unspoken!"

"Never wish it unsaid; you know—none so well—how miserable a man I have been; you would not deny me that one gleam of a better light? Fate has forced us into a mutual confidence; you have told me that which binds us together in a secrecy that keeps your image always present to my mind."

"Listen!" said she, withdrawing her hand decisively from his grasp, while her fine eyes were directed with an expression of alarm upon the door.

He heard a step approach, and a knock at his door. He waved his hand backward, in warning to the young lady, as he advanced to see who was there.

But she passed him quickly, saying aloud—

"As you are interrupted, sir, another time perhaps will answer. I may go now, I suppose?"

Mark Shadwell looked both agitated and annoyed, and he said, also aloud—

"Certainly, Miss Maryln;" and at the same time he opened the door wide and suddenly.

"Well?" said he, looking straight in old Wyndle's face, rather sternly, for it was she who had knocked. "What do you want of me?"

"Oh!" said old Wyndle, prolonging her note of wonder as Miss Marlyn passed slowly from the door.

Miss Marlyn and the housekeeper did not like one another.

The young lady, I think, was pleased, and from her fine eyes just glided across the old retainer's face a glance of hardly disguised disdain and triumph. Mrs. Wyndle drew back, a little pallid, with her nose turned up, and her mouth pursed, and a sharp frown.

"What do you want, Wyndle? I'm not going to stand here all day," said Mark, sharply, cutting short this little bit of by-play.

"Only my mistress wanted to know if she could see you here, sir?" said the old servant, following, with a disdainful sweep of her little grey eyes, the leisurely retreat of Agnes Marlyn.

"Of course she can; what the devil's to prevent her? Every one can see me here, who wants me—provided I'm not busy; and I'm always glad to see her—as she knows. Such rot! Just tell her, I'll go to her room if she likes it, or she can come here, if she likes it better."

And, angrily, Mark shut the door in the face of this privileged domestic.

"What factionists they are, with their d—d jealousies, and little rivalries, and spites!" he muttered. "There is that stupid old Wyndle—she'll be off with a story, I suppose, to Amy, and she'll be crying and grimacing, like a martyr, for a week. I sometimes wish this cursed old house would fall and bury us all under its rubbish; I'm tired of it, I know!"

Mark Shadwell hated a scene. He hated being talked over by his servants; his neighbors he did not care about, for he did not see them. He had never been a vulgar profligate. He thought that vice and all its ways should be kept dark; and Roke Wycherly had thought him, even at his worst, a rather cold and straight-laced fellow. And now, too, being like many men a medley of inconsistencies, he had his ideas of morality—his philosophy and self-control—and at the bottom of his soul was a dastardly hope—which he would not avow even to himself. Amy Shadwell had been very ill, two or three times, lately; the doctor had been called in, and had gone away. In the life of a confirmed invalid, people take little note of these occasional shocks, and things are assumed to return to their old channel. But Mark saw—with sometimes a compunction, sometimes a glow of resignation—that this sad incumbrance could not trouble him very much longer.

"Well, Wyndle?" inquired Mrs. Shadwell, as she entered.

"*Well*, ma'am, yes, and might be better, may be. It's an ill world, ma'am, and the worse the folk the better they thrive. The impittence of that Frenchwoman!" said Mrs. Wyndle, grimly.

"Whom do you mean, Wyndle?"

"Agnes Marlyn, ma'am. She's always a peepin' and pokin' after the master."

"Oh, Wyndle, what do you mean?" said her mistress, haughtily.

"Just that, ma'am; and I'd pack her off without no more delays, ma'am. What business had she shut up in the library wi' the master this minute, when I went down o' your message?"

"Of course, Wyndle, he had sent to give her a direction; you are not to talk so," said the lady, haughtily still, and also uneasily. "I suppose she was leaving the room as you came?"

"Not till after I knocked, ma'am. Then her and the master came to the door together, and out sails my lady, and gives me a look as if I wasn't fit to wipe the dust off her shoes," said the housekeeper.

"Well, you know, you need not quarrel, Wyndle, for she is going to leave us. She wishes to leave us, and she's going."

"And joy go wi' her," she continued, with her privilege. "We all thinks she was just getting her word in about every thing, and tryin' to turn master round her little finger."

This little parenthetic talk left a pain at Amy Shadwell's heart.

Shadwell waited now in his room, but no message came.

"Cool — isn't it?—keeping a fellow waiting here to know her pleasure! That old fool, Wyndle, I suppose, has been telling her a story. What a mystery the love of mischief is! and my meek wife has found a temper at last. She had better not try it on me, though."

I can't say how far his conjecture was right. He took his hat and stick, however, and loitered into the orchard, and spoke to the men who were removing the great pyramids of apples piled upon the grass, and thus trying to cheat himself into the fancy that he was busy and useful, and so into the farm-yard, and then away among his distant woodlands.

On the whole, it had been a day of strange triumphs. Could Agnes Marlyn's half-confessions bear any other meaning than that which his vanity read in them? Could he ever forget her deep eyes, her color, and the sudden breaking out of her fiery spirit? Talk of Swift and Vanessa! Was ever romance more desperately genuine than this? Had he not terrible proof of her devotion? Was not this strange, wild, fierce girl, the most beautiful he had ever seen? Could he escape from her spell? Was not that Hebe always standing by him, filling for him to the brim the cup of madness? But no, she should not wreck herself. Were not these relations of mystery, of subjugation, of half-divulged passion, the most luxurious imaginable? The more she trusted him, the more would he reverence her. A supernatural being, knit to him by mysterious ties. Her devotion should be honored by him, her defenselessness sacred.

CHAPTER LXII.

NEWS OF CARMEL SHERLOCK.

UNROMANTICALLY in this walk was Mark Shadwell's path crossed by the village attorney, who, in local litigations, was wont to act for him. With a qualm of anticipated annoyance he saw him, for he was pursuing the foot-path that leads toward the house; and, with the sure presage of a man in difficulties, Mark knew that a visit from a man of law meant trouble, perhaps danger.

"How d'ye do, Twinley?" said he, stopping short. "Looking for me? Any thing unpleasant?"

"Hope I see you well, Mr. Shadwell.—Well, I hope not, sir, only Mr. Mervyn is going to file a bill to compel execution of the leases for Headlam."

"He shan't get them! I'll—I'll see you to-morrow about it—to-day I can't—if you look in about twelve. We'll talk, if you please, to-morrow," he repeated, a little peremptorily, repressing the attorney's incipient discussion. "I suppose it will do to-morrow. One must sometimes take a little exercise, you know; one can't be always over law and accounts—shall we say to-morrow?"

Mr. Shadwell spoke as tartly as if it was Twinley, and not Mr. Mervyn, who wanted these renewals.

"Very good, sir. I'll look up at twelve o'clock, Mr. Shadwell, as you say, to-morrow. Nice day, sir."

"Charming," he asserted; and so they took leave, and went their several ways.

Mark Shadwell, being a haughty man, did not open his wounds to every one, and never cursed Mr. Mervyn to his attorney. He relieved his feelings now, however, and he talked in soliloquy, in a strain by no means charitable, of the long head and the long purse that had spoiled his morning's walk, and dashed the luxury of his indolent dream with bitterness.

This little reminder of his relations with Mr. Mervyn had its effect by and by. On his return, he found that his daughter had just arrived. He had written in the morning, rather stiffly, to request that she should come home, charging that request upon her mother's state of health, and her very lonely condition in Rachel's absence.

He had not been ten minutes at home, when Rachel arrived. She came into the library to see him. She was looking more than usually pretty, he thought, with a particularly beautiful color, and an indescribable depth and fullness in her eyes, and something of confusion that was new to him. Her good looks, however, did not interest him now. There was no great chance that her beauty, buried where it was, should ever contribute to extricate her family from the quag in which it was sinking. For one dreamy moment, as he gazed with a sort of speculative admiration upon her beauty, he thought, "Were I to make her heiress of Raby—a thousand a year, at least—might not something come of it?" But Mark had no notion of fettering himself, or his miserable property, by adding to her dot of four thousand pounds charged by his settlement. Was he to divest himself of power to raise a thousand pounds if he wanted it? or to marry hereafter, should he recover his melancholy liberty? a step by which, he chose to think, even his daughter might benefit.

Dryly enough, he said—

"You had better run up and see your mother; she has been very lonely."

"Miss Temple came with me, and I think she is still in the hall," hesitated Rachel.

"Oh, is she? Has any thing been heard about Carmel Sherlock since?"

"I think not," began Rachel.

"Well, just ask; and, if there has, come back to me," said he.

He had not waited five minutes, when a visit from Charles Mordaunt, in his room, gave a new turn to his thoughts. The sight of old Mervyn's nephew was not pleasant, and his countenance and manner showed it. He received him coldly, and without a smile.

It was plainly no common visit, for he was pale, and preoccupied and nervous. It was plain, too, that there was something on his mind which he must speak,—and speak it he did.

A proud and fiery man is a bad custodian of his own interests. Had Mark been in a reason-

able mood, he would have thought twice before dismissing any chance of relieving himself of the care and embarrassment of his daughter's guardianship. But the immediate temptation to snub Mervyn's nephew was too much for him, especially as that nephew had nothing but his commission and three hundred a year to offer.

"You are a very young man, Mr. Mordaunt, or you could not suppose that I could seriously entertain such a thing; and I can hardly suppose that your uncle, Mr. Mervyn, who has seen fit to challenge me to a lawsuit only the other day, can possibly have advised your making me any such proposal, and, in any case, I must say it is one which I can't think of; and, without meaning any thing unkind, I must say that I beg there may be no more about it. Has not Miss Temple called? I must go and see her. Shall we come?"

And, with his unpleasant smile and a peremptoriness of tone not to be mistaken, he uttered this little sentence, and preceded poor Mordaunt, who was in a state of dreadful bewilderment, from the room.

I can not say that, in point of prudence, there was much to recommend this marriage. Perhaps a wise and kind father would have given it as decided a negative as Mark Shadwell did. But wild lamentations, in which romantic old Barbara joined, and profound dejection followed. Mark, however, was clear and peremptory, and in a very short time an idea entered his mind, which quite sealed his determination upon this point.

Weeks passed, and Miss Marlyn still lingered on. It was not her doing, neither was it owing to any indecision on the part of Mrs. Shadwell. When the day appointed for Miss Marlyn's departure had nearly come, Mark told his wife that he had been disappointed in money, and that the simple, vulgar truth was that he could not pay Miss Marlyn, and she must wait a week or two longer. "You must tell her to go, Amy," he said. But Amy entreated him to undertake that task himself; and, as he secretly wished to take it out of his wife's hands, he did consent to do so. And Miss Agnes Marlyn consented to remain a little longer at Raby, to old Wyndle's loud discontent, and poor Mrs. Shadwell's secret anxiety.

In old Raby church, when Rachel and Miss Marlyn attended morning service there on the Sunday following, they saw a young gentleman in solitary occupation of the square pew next theirs. His get-up was unexceptionable, and he was undoubtedly good-looking, with something of the interesting air, the languor, and the pallor of an invalid.

Very soft, large eyes, a delicately-formed nose, rather high, pale, gentle, handsome face; rich, silken, wavy, brown hair, and a decidedly elegant exterior, could not fail to excite a gentle curiosity in young ladies so near — even in church.

Rachel had rallied since the occurrence I have last described. The cheerful support of Miss Barbara, most generous of match-makers, and the romantic sympathies of Mrs. Shadwell, were all in favor of Charles Mordaunt, and Rachel was persuaded by these ministering spirits that the opposition of her father was simply one of those jolts and hitches in the path of true love which uniformly turn up and uniformly disappear. She was by no means, therefore, in that state of interesting apathy, begotten of despair, which refuses to take note of the outer world. And she did speculate a little, like Miss Marlyn, when she ought to have been better employed, about this stranger.

There is in Raby, as every body knows who has ever dipped into a book on the mineral waters of England, a well, known as the Raby Spa, whose peculiar virtues attract generally some four or five visitors at a time, during the summer months, to the inn, or, as we now term it, the hotel, of that quiet and quaint little town. Whenever a stranger, above the level of a religious missionary or a prosperous farmer, appears in the church of Raby, he is assumed to be, and pretty uniformly rightly, a flying visitor to "the Spa."

The stranger stole a few of those very quiet and cautious glances, which a well-bred man, leaning over the side of a pew and at his devotions, will permit himself in such a case.

The young ladies were delayed some ten minutes at old Mrs. Ford's cottage, and, having visited the sick, they drove home.

As they drove up the avenue, whom should they pass but the interesting stranger.

"There he is again, Rachel!" said Miss Marlyn. "I suppose he has got leave to walk over the place."

"Yes—I'm sure that is it," said Rachel, both young ladies seeing, without looking at, the object of their curiosity. This conjecture turned out, however, to be erroneous.

They had not been in the house many minutes, when the stranger walked boldly up the steps, knocked and rang, and asked for Mr. Shadwell, telling the servant to say Captain Clayton, of the—(mentioning a distinguished cavalry regiment), and then, on second thoughts, he wrote on his card, "On sick leave," and gave it to the servant.

Forth came Shadwell, and was rather pleased to see him. He made him come in and take a biscuit and a glass of sherry, and then brought him for a walk through his wild and beautiful park.

This gleam of hospitality was not a mere caprice. A dull docile man is sometimes better company than a brilliant man, with his eyes about him and a vein of satire.

Clayton looked about four-and-thirty, but was in reality a good deal more. Shadwell had known him, very intimately, some sixteen years ago, when they used to play a great deal of billiards together, at his club, and Mark always beat him, and he thought Mark a wit and a philosopher. There was not much in Clayton; but this kind of admiration was the most agreeable quality imaginable, and healed the wounded vanity of the recluse.

Clayton could narrate things accurately enough, and answer his questions about the Crimea, and could not help knowing a great deal that was interesting. But his chief excellence was that he admired easily, and was absolutely without the faculty of satirical observation.

Clayton had been sent to Raby by his doctor, merely to try the Spa for a week; and, if it promised to do him good, he was to return after his visit to Scotland, and complete his recovery.

He was just the man, also, to answer the style of Raby hospitalities. He affected simple fare, and was under rule not to exceed two glasses of sherry. Mark could, therefore, have no fears about having him to dine, and next day, accordingly, he came. It is inexpressible the relief which Mark found in this humdrum companionship, which, nevertheless, in so many essential points, so exactly suited him. It was human society and associations recovered suddenly, in a solitude which had but one capricious charm, and, except when that intervened, had become almost insupportably horrible.

With this Captain Clayton, who could tell so much about those memorable battle-fields and incidents of siege-life which were then so fresh in people's minds, and who was so communicative, and so disposed to be pleased, something like the glow of social life and interest returned to those sombre rooms.

Every evening during his stay he passed at Raby, and now at last Mark Shadwell did observe unquestionable evidences of something more than a fancy—a very decided penchant—for his daughter in this very eligible person; and although a recent deception had made him wary, still there was a very marked difference between this dull and comparatively simple man, and the unscrupulous and active intriguer who had now done troubling and tempting, and lay simpering, with his dark heart pierced through, under his triple coffin-lid.

"How you must all have suffered," said Captain Clayton, one day after dinner, as in his *tête-à-tête* with Mark he sipped his cup of coffee, "while that miserable business was going on here. I was at Malta when it happened. There's a fellow in prison for it, isn't there?"

"Yes."

"And do you think he'll be hanged?"

"I hope not, poor devil, for he's perfectly mad."

"Oh? The man at the hotel here says he was a wonderfully clever fellow."

"Yes, wonderfully clever, but very odd, and actually mad," said Mark Shadwell.

"Have you seen him in prison?"

"No. We shall hear all about it, however, early in spring, when the judges come down to Applebury."

And Mark grew suddenly silent, and his face looked old and sombre, and after two or three minutes lost in profound abstraction, he suddenly roused himself, saying, "As you won't take any wine, if you have finished your coffee, suppose we come into the drawing-room."

Clayton looked very well pleased at the proposition.

"I shall miss my pleasant quarters awfully when I leave," he said.

"But that is not for some time, and you mustn't talk of it," said Mark, with something of anxiety as well as of politeness; for Clayton was in a measure to him what the friendly watcher in the nursery is to the nervous child, and he dreaded the hour when his long solitary evenings were to return.

Was not his secretary an occasional resource? Yes; she interested him perhaps more than ever. But Mark felt that old Wyndle and the other servants watched him, and compared notes, hating Miss Marlyn, and all intense partisans of his wife. He had, he assured himself, nothing to conceal. He defied them. But this sort of prying not only exasperated but embarrassed him, and sorely abridged his opportunities.

Besides, Clayton had certainly begun to like Rachel, and with this fancy, which, seeing that she was an only child, did not appear by any means imprudent, had visited him visions of Arcadian life very like those which false Sir Roke had affected. To be half frozen, wounded, rendered incapable, by a shot in the ankle, of ever dancing again, to have passed three months in pain in a hospital, and more than a year in a very precarious invalided state, is not a bad sedative.

When they went to the drawing-room he saw Clayton as usual address himself to Rachel, and he was glad. Clayton, though not rich in the exalted sense, was yet very well. He had more than two thousand a year, "and possibilities." And that night, in his farewell talk with Mark, for he was to start for Scotland next morning, he admitted his admiration a little, and then a little more, and so on, till he made a full confession of his liking. He had not spoken to Rachel. He had heard something about an engagement; in fact, though he did not mention her name, it was Miss Marlyn who had told him that Rachel liked Charles Mordaunt, and was to be married to him.

Mark made short work with this suspicion, and they parted with a kind of understanding that Clayton after his visit to Scotland, to which he was committed for at least seven months, was to return to Raby, and make him a less hurried visit.

Next day Clayton was gone, and Mark left alone with his cares.

In his sudden allusion, on the night before, to the death of Roke Wycherly and to his murderer, Clayton had unwittingly disturbed an anxious question in Mark Shadwell's mind. Should he go forthwith, and visit Carmel Sherlock in Applebury prison? There were *pros* and *cons*. His judgment told him very distinctly that he ought to go, and without any more procrastination; but a reluctance he could not overcome restrained him day after day and week after week. And as the interval grew, so did the care that loaded his heart. Clayton's unexpected question had startled him more than the occasional suggestions of his own mind.

On this morning Mark had been in his library among his books and papers, when this note reached him from the vicar:

"My dear Shadwell:—I have just returned, very late, from Applebury, where, I am sorry to say, poor Carmel Sherlock is extremely ill, and the doctor says, in imminent danger. His illness is gastric fever, which he must have had for a considerable time. For several days he had been eating absolutely nothing, but declined to report himself ill; and it was supposed to be one of those obstinate cases of temper which I am told sometimes occur in prison, and are always subdued in the natural course, by hunger. But suddenly he began to sink, and is rapidly losing ground; and on a visit made yesterday by the doctor, is ascertained to be too probably dying. I saw him to-day. He is very weak, and seems to speak with difficulty, but expressed

twice so *very* earnest a wish to see you—in fact, conjured me so to persuade you to see him—that I trouble you with this note, which has grown into a letter. I shall be at Applebury again to-morrow at ten, to see the poor man, and I shall tell him that I gave you the message. Believe me, my dear Shadwell, yours truly,

"S. TEMPLE.

"P. S. I find it too late to send to-night, but you shall have this note to-morrow morning."

"That man will die, something tells me; I don't mind doctors and clergymen—but he's going to die!"

So spoke Mark Shadwell, flushing suddenly and fiercely. Mark stood up, and read the note again, and then looked at his watch. "I ought to have had that at seven this morning."

He rang the bell furiously, and not waiting for an answer, he strode across the hall, and shouted down the passage to command some one to order the fellow in the stable to get his horse instantly. He threw on his hat and coat in the hall, waited for a few minutes, in a deep reverie, at the door-steps, then walked round hurriedly to the stables; and in a few minutes more was riding at a rapid trot in the direction of Applebury.

CHAPTER LXIII.

SHERLOCK'S STORY.

MARK SHADWELL dismounted at the inn door, in the market-place of Applebury, and inquired whether the vicar had been there. He learned that he had been in the town before nine o'clock, having an appointment to keep with Thomas Foukes, of the Mills, and he had shortly afterward visited the prison, and returned by ten o'clock.

"Is Mr. Temple still here?"

"No, sir, he went up the town a bit. He said he'd be leaving, may be, in twenty minutes, and his horse is at his feed."

"Did he say any thing of a prisoner who was ill?" asked Shadwell, anxious to lighten his suspense.

"No, sir."

Throwing the bridle to the man, he walked quickly toward the narrow street in which stands the jail of Applebury. At the corner he met Stour Temple.

"Oh!" said he, stopping. "Thanks for your note—I'm here in consequence. How is he?"

"He'll never speak more, the doctor says," answered Stour Temple with a shake of his head; "he has sunk into a lethargy, and is dying."

Shadwell sighed like a man who puts a load off, and looked down on the pavement for a little.

"Have you seen him more than once?—I hope he did speak."

Shadwell looked pale and anxious as he raised his eyes to ask this question.

"Yes, he did; and I was anxious to see you," answered the vicar, in a low tone. "Shall we get into the room at the inn? There is no use in your going on to the prison. He can neither hear nor speak—poor, unhappy man!"

They turned and walked down the steep little street toward the market-place. Mark, in a very low tone, said—

"I suppose he confessed every thing?"

"He told me a very odd story," said the vicar; "you shall hear all when we get in. Don't you think we had better wait—it's only a minute?"

"Certainly—as you think so."

Mark felt very oddly; and in his suppressed agony of suspense, he looked with what carelessness he could assume up toward the sky, and across from one gable-point to another among the quaint houses, as if in a sudden anxiety to read the weather.

They had now reached the inn door. There was no one in the small room with the bow-window looking across the unequally-paved square.

"We can have this quietly—to ourselves?" asked the vicar. The waiter acquiesced; and Stour Temple, shutting the door, drew near the window, where they sat down.

"The wretched man was quite aware that he is dying—in fact, it was only because he thought death so near that he despaired of your coming in time, and told me the circumstances."

"He confessed the murder, did he?" asked Shadwell.

"No—that is, he did confess the moral guilt," began the vicar.

"I don't understand," said Shadwell, growing paler.

"Well, I'll explain; I'll tell from the beginning—you know it was not always easy to follow poor Sherlock's meaning."

"No—there I agree—one must be a cabalist, or a rosicrucian, to guess at it—quite mad," acquiesced Mark Shadwell.

"Well, my translation of his meaning is just this: from the moment he heard of Sir Roke Wycherly's visit, he had a foreboding of evil he could not account for."

"Yes—yes—his dreams and demons," said Mark. "He told me—go on, pray,"

"Well, I know it is your wish that I should be quite frank. Of course there were foolish, or, as you say, mad things mixed up in what he said; and you'll forgive me for telling you one of them, because it evidently accounts for part of what has happened."

"Pray, tell me every thing. I know—better than ever lately—that he was quite out of his mind; I shan't be surprised at any thing."

"Well, then, he did not say so distinctly, but there is no other way of accounting for his language; in fact, he conveyed the admission that he had cherished a secret and absurd, but most passionate, attachment to Miss Shadwell."

"Oh!—Indeed!—Very flattering."

"No one, of course, suspected any thing so preposterous, for he described it as a secret, as well as I could make out, between him and his violin, and his demon, and kept it close within his own heart. Then came a suspicion that Sir Roke Wycherly had come to Raby to pay his addresses to your daughter."

"That is strange!" said Mark, quickly, "for poor Roke had taken a violent fancy; and had, in fact, made up his mind to ask my daughter to marry him. I can't say, of course, that so young a girl, and one so entirely out of all merely worldly influences, would have dreamed

of it; but, I may tell you now, he talked to me in a way that could not admit of a doubt as to his intentions. All that was laid in the dust with poor Roke himself, and what you say throws quite a new light on the motive."

"Yes, there was jealousy; but he says that, quite apart from that, there was another influence prompting him to that crime."

"That's pretty plain," said Mark, with a grim shrug.

"He told me it was an impulse which he found it eventually impossible to resist. He was so persuaded that he was drifting toward that dreadful crime, that he told you and Mrs. Shadwell that he must leave Raby, but not until after he had actually attempted to enter Sir Roke's room at night, with the distinct purpose of taking away his life."

"Lamentable that he should not have told us his reason for urging his departure. It was my insisting on his postponing it, then, that caused this miserable affair—but who could have fancied any thing so perverted and dreadful?" said Mark, who was looking more and more miserable as their conversation proceeded.

"On the night of the murder he had resolved to confine himself strictly to his room, until the early morning, when he meant to leave Raby. But his strange temptation assailed him, and overcame him. He stole through the passages and came to Sir Roke's door, which he found open. He had in his hand the Malayan dagger which was found in Sir Roke's room. He entered, as he said, as noiselessly as a spirit;—there was light. Sir Roke was not in his bed; he saw him, as he fancied, dozing in his chair. He said as he approached, the resolution to put him to death grew more inflexible. He described himself as all the time freezing with a kind of horror at his own meditated act. On reaching the chair he found that Sir Roke was already dead, and weltering in his blood, as we found him."

Shadwell, as this narration proceeded, had risen; and, standing with his shoulder to the window-frame, was staring down on Stour Temple almost as one might have fancied Carmel Sherlock looking down on the dead face of the baronet.

When Stour Temple looked up, he was shocked. Was it Mark Shadwell or a ghost? That old face—frowning, trying to smile, with the eyes of a detective. His doubtful glance awakened something in Temple's startled countenance that recalled Mark Shadwell, and he laughed suddenly.

"A cock-and-bull story, eh?—rather?" he said. "The fellow's madder than I had an idea, and also more cunning. You don't quite believe all that—do you?"

"I—I hardly know what to believe," said Temple; "I have not had time to think it over yet. I only know that odd as his language was, and odder still his mystic ramblings, the story itself was perfectly consistent. He said that he remembered dropping the knife from his hand, and concluded that he must have picked up the dagger, with which the murder had actually been committed, by mistake. He fancied that it was his own, and thought he had effectually concealed it afterward in the stable-yard."

"Yes, it's all a muddle; I wonder you had patience to listen to him. The man's dreaming; always mad, and now in a fever," said Mark.

"Very weak, it is true; but he appeared to me as collected as I remember him at any time."

"Not saying very much, though."

"This, however, is no matter of theory or imagination. There, I grant you, he was always wild enough; but one simply of recollection, as you shall hear. He said that as he approached the door, some one went hurriedly out. He saw the shadow on the wall, after the figure quickly turned the corner of the gallery. He fancied, I can't say why, that it might be Sir Roke himself, in his dressing-gown, and followed quickly; and he distinctly saw that it was Miss Marlyn. He knew that she was awake and up. She had been, he says, at his own door not very long before. He thinks she had some quarrel with Sir Roke Wycherly—"

"Why, she did not know Sir Roke," interrupted Mark.

"Oh! pardon me, I thought I had mentioned *that*. She did know him—he admired her when she was at that school, in France. I thought, in fact, I had mentioned—but, on second thoughts, I believe I did not— the unpleasant rumors affecting him, which I did mention to Sir Roke himself."

Mark looked down; the contents of Miss Marlyn's desk had apprised him of this discreditable acquaintance—a scandal now condoned. He had not been aware before, however, that it was known to Stour Temple, and this discovery was embarrassing.

"What can I know of Miss Marlyn's acquaintances before she came to Raby, except what you told me, of which you seemed not to be very certain yourself, and what the principal of the school herself disclosed. There was nothing about Roke Wycherly there, There was absolutely nothing but what might be said, by a spiteful old woman, of any good-looking girl who had the misfortune to reside under her authority. Nothing but malice could account for Sherlock's talking such stuff, if we did not both know that he is crazy."

"Well, I can't quite agree with you. An acquaintance there certainly was; and, it would seem, an understanding, at one time at least; and Carmel Sherlock is quite distinct upon one point, and that is that she was the person who he believes came out of Sir Roke's room. He has not the slightest doubt that she was the person whom he saw in the gallery. She was walking very quickly, and he could not hear her tread."

"All very fine if poor Sherlock had been in his senses," said Mark.

"I always thought Carmel Sherlock a man of very acute observation and accurate memory," said Stour.

"Yes, and one who saw visions, in a matter where his imagination was excited. I would not hang a dog on his evidence."

"I'm merely submitting what Sherlock very positively stated; I don't offer any remarks of my own; but he said, in distinct terms, that he had no doubt the murder was committed by that person—Miss Agnes Marlyn."

"Why, my good God! sir, you can't seriously mean any thing so hideous and absurd?" said Mark Shadwell, with a pale sneer.

"The meaning is not mine. I simply repeat what the dying man told me," remarked the clergyman.

"Simply!" sneered Mark again.

"And, you know, it would be quite out of the question my presuming to suppress it," said the vicar.

"True churchman, Temple," muttered Shadwell, bitterly. "Your true Christian loves punishment—sacrifice, you know—and as one victim slips through our fingers, we try to lay hold on another. I don't think you ever liked that poor young woman much?"

Stour Temple looked with an unconscious sternness for a moment, and Mark lowered his eyes before his surprised and searching gaze.

"One would naturally feel an interest in her," began the vicar, who made it a rule never to be offended with Mark.

"Well, I think so: an orphan girl, cast on the world so very young, without kindred or friends, I do think it rather appeals to—I don't say our Christianity—though I have read something somewhere, like 'thinketh no evil'—but to our manliness and decency. I say, I think it appalls one, even whispering such a charge, upon the evidence of a madman, against a creature so defenseless and inexperienced."

White and angry looked Mark as he spoke, and as if he hated the vicar, who, in his cold way, simply added—

"You see, I tell you all this as a magistrate. It does appear quite incredible; but is there any thing so mysterious and paradoxical as crime? What new and terrible ideas of human nature it gives us."

"Oh! yes—philosophy and psychology—all very fine; but you will not get twelve men in a Christian country to believe, on the evidence of a mad assassin, that a poor little good-natured governess overpowered and slew a baronet of six feet high, and without any assignable motive. Come, what do you seriously advise me to do with this notable piece of evidence? Had I better ask you to swear an information, and ask the Crown to take it up? Do you think the country would ever allow such a joke to die against you and me?"

"I care very little," said the vicar, "who laughs, provided I have acquitted myself of my duty. Different men will value that dying declaration differently. I have a full note of it with me, and am ready to make affidavit to its accuracy, whenever I may be called on."

"Yes—yes—of course; I am quite sure that Carmel Sherlock said every word you repeat; but surely you must see that to pretend we had a case for indicting Miss Marlyn—my good God! as much a lady, in all respects, as you and I are gentlemen—would be simply to utter a frantic libel. We don't believe it; we can't believe it—you no more than I."

"What steps do you mean to take?" asked the vicar.

A silence followed.

"Well, it is not easy, at a moment," said Mark, with a change of manner; and he walked to the window and looked out over the red blinds into the drowsy old market-place, across the jolty pavement, and to the picturesque gables, the tinted fronts and latticed windows, that looked to him like an odd dream. And he added, returning, "You would not mind giving me that copy of Sherlock's story?"

"I'll make a fair copy, and you shall have it," said the vicar.

"Yes, that's what I mean; thanks. I'll—I'll take an opinion upon it—an able opinion—and we'll put our heads together. And, I suppose, we both consider it right to be perfectly silent on this subject until I shall have got professional advice to guide me?" said Mark, looking hard at him.

"*Certainly*," said the vicar, with a re-assuring emphasis.

"I knew you'd agree with me," said Mark. There was a pause, and then he said: "I wonder how Sherlock is now? Let us go and see."

Sherlock was worse, and could not live through the night. He lay in an uneasy lethargy, moaning, mumbling half-sentences, turning feverishly, and nowhere and nowhow finding ease—like a man dying in the fever of overfatigue—too exhausted for sleep, too exhausted for consciousness.

The doctor had looked in for the last time, while Mark and the vicar were talking in the inn "parlor," and Carmel Sherlock, in a few hours more, was to die.

In the night he would go—in the darkness which he had peopled with sights and voices, and pass through the throes and shades of chaos into the wonderful life of spirits!

So, drowning now in Lethe, the struggle, growing faint and fainter, would end surely in a few hours more, and he have sunk.

Farewell the queer old room at Raby, the battered quartos, the desultory life, the enchanted Straduarius, the moonlit vigils, and that wild despairing love, that mingled with its music like a distant song and cry—all is hopeless jumble now, colors mingling, sounds confused, floating, and moving away toward the final darkness and silence.

Mark loitered on, from hour to hour, in the little town of Applebury. I think, so long as Carmel Sherlock lived, there was a feeling of suspense. It were something, if that were ended before he mounted his horse. A few hours saw the short day out. The vicar's business in the neighborhood was ended. They mounted their horses at the little inn door together.

A melancholy sunset, a wild blood-red glare faded into darkness, and a frosty starlight followed. The vicar and Mark rode away, side by side, in silence. I don't think a word was exchanged until they reached that point where the road to Raby diverges; and there they bid one another good-night, and pursued their solitary routes homeward.

It was growing cold. Mark buttoned his wrapper closely across. One look over his shoulder he took toward the distant town of Applebury, and with a heavy heart thought of the matchless fidelity of poor Carmel Sherlock dying there in prison. Then he spurred homeward; and, as he looked before him into the darkness, trees and hedges dimly gliding by, a different feeling succeeded; for was there not a beautiful face at the end of this night-ride that interested him, and made the darkness romantic?

CHAPTER LXIV.

A CRISIS.

NEXT morning came news from Applebury. Carmel Sherlock was dead, and Mark Shadwell was both glad and sorry. The sense of relief was disturbed, however, by the consciousness that Stour Temple had heard Sherlock's confession, and was watching him.

It was some weeks before Shadwell saw the vicar again. He met him under the old trees, now stark and leafless in the clear wintry air, as they both rode into the little town of Raby. They had not yet reached the houses, and with one accord they both drew bridle, and came to a walk.

"I sent that case up to my attorney in town," said Shadwell, almost the first thing after their greeting, "and had it submitted to Skelton, the Queen's Counsel, for general advice, and he says that, taking into account the facts that are proved as to poor Sherlock's state of mind, and unsupported as his statement is by a single particle of circumstantial evidence — considering how long it was delayed, and that the attempt to criminate another came from a person about himself to stand his trial for the crime on strong and clear evidence, there was no excuse for moving in it; in fact, he scouts it. I did not, of course, name the person whom the miserable man indicated."

"Quite right," said Temple.

"I knew you would think so. The fact is, we all know now the poor fellow was literally mad; and to act on his dreams as if they were facts would be a most monstrous cruelty."

"Can the servants throw any light upon it?" asked the vicar.

"None in the world, except negatively," said Mark. "They saw and heard nothing, no commotion, not the slightest sound. There was only that fellow Clewson, you remember, who heard or saw any thing. What do you think of him?"

"Well, I thought he gave his evidence in a very distinct, unembarrassed way. I don't think any one suspected him," said the vicar slowly, thinking as he spoke.

"Yes, I know, and *I* don't suspect him now; but that's because I don't believe one word of poor Sherlock's story," said Mark. "I'm quite certain the whole thing was one of his visions; but if I fancied—which, mind you, I do not—that Sherlock's narrative was a reality, my first suspicion would light upon Clewson."

"Why on Clewson?" said Temple.

"Roke had a fancy for expensive seals and rings, and all that sort of jeweler's finery; he had bank-notes, for he told me so—he hated letters of credit, and all that sort of thing that gave him the least trouble. I think somewhere about seventy pounds was all that came to light on the inquest; but, Heaven only knows! what it might have been. Don't you see a possible motive? Remember, not a creature on earth knew, but he, what money or valuables Roke may have had with him, or what his trinkets were like; a lot of them he may never have worn in England, don't you see?"

"Yes, of course, to rob him; but, I remember, it appeared in evidence that Roke used to secure the door between himself and his servant," began the vicar.

"Very true," interposed Mark; "but so he used the door opening on the gallery. Now, it is clear that on the fatal night he must have neglected one or the other; and why not that? If Clewson were the man, he would naturally, being no fool I suppose, open the other door, and leave it so, to suggest the idea that the murderer had entered from the gallery."

"But how about the person whom he saw leave the door?" said the vicar.

"Assuming, for the sake of testing the hypothesis, that this was so, I fancy it easier to believe that a young, harmless person like that passing near, and hearing perhaps some strange ejaculations and sounds, on reaching the door and seeing it partly open, should have listened there a moment, and, possibly, even peeped, and gone away quickly on hearing Sherlock's step approaching."

"There may be something in that about Clewson," pondered the vicar, gravely. "Do you believe it?"

"Not a word of it; and so I should swear as a witness, because Sherlock has told me—and, in fact, whenever his imagination was in the slightest degree moved, he never failed to tell me —of marvels he saw. He saw Roke Wycherly come in at his door in the shape of a gigantic cock fluttering his wings, and with his comb bleeding. He has had conversations at the tarn at Feltram with the lady who threw herself out of the window at Wynderfel four hundred years ago, and saw her walk over the water with the most perfect distinctness, and several hundred equally wonderful revelations. In fact, in such a situation, with nerves admittedly excited to the highest pitch, and believing himself at the moment in actual communication with demons, I could not place the smallest reliance upon any evidence of his, or the reality of any thing he fancied he had seen or heard; no human being who knew any thing whatever of him could."

Here ensued a considerable interval of silence.

"The next time you are passing our way, Temple, you must look in. I'll give you my case and Skelton's opinion to read, and you'll see it all in a moment; and in the meantime, I need not say how imperatively every consideration of honor, pity, and decency imposes silence upon us respecting the poor girl whose name Sherlock has mingled in his tale."

"I quite agree with you," said the vicar.

"Yes," said Mark, "I knew you would."

"A sad tragedy—full of instruction," said the vicar, awaking, as it were, from a little reverie. "Had Sir Roke married early some one whom he loved and respected, how different his life, and his fate too, would have been!"

"You speak out of the fullness of your heart, Temple. You went right from your college to a curacy. If you had seen something of the world, or even married, yourself, you'd hardly have made so innocent a speech. Why, a vicious fellow becomes ten times more vicious if he marries; it's a snare simply, and an aggravation of our miserable, hampered, short, sick existence here."

The vicar sighed, and said—

"We are not agreed upon many points, I'm afraid."

"Not upon that, certainly. It is part of

priestcraft, making every thing irrevocable and irremediable. Vows and dedications! What can be more ridiculous and damnable than joining an unsuitable man and woman together in that irrevocable association we are speaking of?"

"And so our discussion leaves us, as usual, pretty much where it found us," said the vicar, with a faint smile and a shake of his head, and a short silence followed.

"Miss Marlyn is still at Raby?" said the vicar.

"Yes; it depends on my wife how soon she goes. I suppose she will take her leave whenever it is quite at my wife's convenience. Commend me to women for taking good care of themselves."

So Miss Marlyn lingered on at Raby. I don't think, notwithstanding this satirical speech of Mark Shadwell's, that his wife had even a voice in the matter. He would have liked people to think that the poor little nonentity who pined out her remaining days, with some complainings and little usefulness, gently in her sick-room at Raby bullied him in this, and thwarted him in other things, and had been, negatively at least, the fatal incompatibility to whom he owed his failure, and all the mortifications attendant on it.

"Mark, dear," she said to him hesitatingly one day, "has any thing been settled about Miss Marlyn since?"

"*Un*-settled, I suppose you mean," said Mark, sharply. "About sending her away, eh?" and he laughed a little angrily. "There's just this difficulty: When that miserable fellow Sherlock died, I locked up his room, and should have given myself simply up to ruin, if she had not been here to undertake—as she has done, very cheerfully—a portion of the drudgery which must be got through, day by day, to save my affairs from falling into inextricable confusion. I don't happen to know any one else in this house who would take the trouble of copying papers and writing letters—sixteen letters only yesterday—do you?"

"I wish I could, but the doctors won't let me write; I'm such a wretched creature, Mark—such a burden—so useless."

"I did not say you could help it; I only venture to think it's only reasonable I should have a little help provisionally wherever I can find it."

"Of course, dear Mark; certainly."

"You can do just as you please, whenever I have found any one to take Sherlock's place—the sooner that is, of course, the better for me. In the meantime I shan't undertake impossibilities, nor kill myself in the attempt, nor let myself drift into insolvency, merely to get rid of Miss Marlyn."

And, muttering to himself, he left the room angrily and suddenly.

Careless and contemptuous Mark's treatment of his wife had long been. But of late there was something of impatience and acrimony, and a perpetual harping on the folly of unsuitable marriages, and the indolence or uselessness of wives. These allusions were general, but the insult was particular, and she writhed under these cold barbarities.

There was a terrible change here. Indifference was assuming the sneer of intolerance. "He hates me—oh! he hates me—he hates me!" she used to sob, in her solitary agonies. "I made an idol of him—I adored him—and now I'm punished. Oh, Mark—Mark, darling! how have I deserved it from *you?* I could not help change and sickness—a weary life—useless, as you say. I know how it must try your patience, with all your cares, my poor, harassed darling! You are not yourself—you are not yourself: your life is one long trouble, and I know it is my fault—so helpless and wretched"—and so on, neither very logically nor coherently, but in great bitterness of spirit.

Then Rachel would come in, and her mother would smile piteously from her tears, drying them hastily; for these griefs were not for her ear, nor for any others.

There was also another change—a very decided one—in Miss Marlyn. Perfectly quiet, perfectly submissive, there was an irony in her docility and an exaggeration in her submissiveness that were intangibly insulting. Even had Amy Shadwell been shrewd, hard, and irascible, instead of the most timid and gentle of women, it would not have been easy for her to fasten upon a particular ground of quarrel. For this premeditated impertinence was always arranged with a view to evasion.

Sometimes the young lady, as her spirits varied, approached Mrs. Shadwell in a different vein. She would affect quite her old manner, and talk volubly, as if in the consciousness that her conversation was exactly the thing which Mrs. Shadwell most enjoyed, though she must have seen that these interviews gave her more pain than others, and were met with very decided discouragement.

This was not wonderful, for in these communicative moods Miss Marlyn never failed, before her talk was ended, to suggest or insinuate something mysterious and untold to the prejudice of Mr. Shadwell. These vague and intangible hints, whose meaning, for one moment legible and terrific, seemed in the next to dissolve and disappear, affrighted Mrs. Shadwell, like the intrusions of a spectre, vanishing before perfectly revealed.

Were these ambiguities accidental? Were they produced by chance looks and phrases? Did Miss Marlyn herself see their odd significance? They helped the effect of other changes in Miss Marlyn's conduct, and invested that beautiful lady, in the eyes of the invalid lady, with an indefinable character that was not only repulsive but formidable.

Mrs. Shadwell in her room was sitting by the fire, listening to a little narrative of Rachel's, when Miss Marlyn looked, in, paused, and retreated.

I don't know whether Rachel was talking about Miss Marlyn at the moment, but that young lady, during her few moments' hesitation at the threshold, looked from one to the other with an amused smile—a scarcely perceptible sneer—which seemed to say, "I've surprised you in high chat upon me; shouldn't I be rather *de trop* here?"

She acted provokingly well. Her air was that of a person trying to seem unconscious of her discovery, and suppressing every evidence of her amusement.

"Call her back; tell her to come in," said Mrs. Shadwell. Rachel did so, and in came Miss Agnes Marlyn.

"Pray sit down; you had better sit near the fire, hadn't you? It's very cold—isn't it, Miss Marlyn?" said Mrs. Shadwell.

"Very cold," acquiesced Miss Marlyn, with a gentle emphasis which conveyed a covert meaning.

Miss Marlyn sat down timidly—ceremoniously a little—and remained silent, after the manner of one admitted into a superior presence.

"I hope you keep a good fire down stairs?" said Mrs. Shadwell.

"You take a great deal too much trouble about me," she answered, with a faint, unpleasant smile; "you do, indeed, Mrs. Shadwell."

"I should be very sorry, so long as you stay with us, that you were any thing, by any accident, but perfectly comfortable, Miss Marlyn," answered Amy.

"I should be very happy to abridge that so kind anxiety," said Agnes Marlyn sadly, "if I could."

Mrs. Shadwell was silent—perhaps a little embarrassed—for assuredly she also, perhaps with more sincerity, wished Agnes Marlyn's stay at Raby shortened; and yet she had no distinct ground of quarrel with the young lady which she could allege.

Miss Marlyn, looking down, smiled again. Rachel leaned back in her chair, with nearly closed eyes, as if in a reverie; she, too, was embarrassed—that kind of feeling is so contagious.

Then followed a silence of some minutes, during which you might hear the hum of the little jet of flame that spurted from over the bar.

"Don't you think that we are all going to sleep?" said Rachel, after some minutes had passed in this way, turning to Agnes.

"I am not sleepy; my thoughts always amuse me," said Agnes Marlyn, in her ambiguous way.

Rachel looked at her a little vexed.

"I suppose you were thinking of some of the amusing people you knew in France; at least, I hope you were not thinking of us; for it is not pleasant to be laughed at, or even smiled at, as you sometimes smile," she said.

Miss Marlyn did actually laugh very faintly here, turning away her head.

"Rachel, dear!" said Mrs. Shadwell, in a tone of gentle reproof.

"I've remarked lately that you laugh, Agnes, when I am serious, and are grave when I am merry. It is not pleasant," said Rachel.

"People such as I are not pleasant company. It is not my fault that I am here. You and your mamma, I hope, know how unwillingly I find myself detained; but, as you are so frank, I will be candid also. Your papa is not able to pay me the small arrear of my salary. If I had other means I should go away to-day, and willingly forgive that little debt; but I have no money, and without money there is nothing to to be done."

"Oh! Miss Marlyn! I had hoped you were not so anxious to leave us; and I assure you I would have spoken to Mr. Shadwell, had I known you were made uncomfortable by his delay."

Miss Marlyn, turning away slowly, smiled again, faintly and bitterly.

"Many thanks; but I should not hesitate to speak myself to Mr. Shadwell, if I thought that speaking on the subject could be of any use; as it is, he asks me to await his convenience, and I suppose I must. You can't be more anxious to dismiss me, than I am to resign; the difficulty is, perhaps, a little ridiculous, but we can't help it, can we?"

"You're extremely impertinent," said Rachel, with a fiery glance and a brilliant color.

"Rachel, dear, you mustn't!" entreated her mother.

"She has my leave to call me impertinent as often as she pleases," said Miss Marlyn; "it only shows that I have reason in wishing to go; and when I please I can retaliate, for language is at every one's service, ain't it? But I shan't, though I need only pick up two or three unpleasant adjectives—insolent, beggarly, and so forth—and throw them back to you, but your caprices and insults shall not tempt me into such a meanness," said Miss Marlyn, with the same bitter smile, and growing very pale, with an angry glare in her eyes.

"Caprices and insults, Miss Marlyn!" echoed Mrs. Shadwell, in amazement.

"Caprices and insults, *yes*. I did not want to be petted. I came here as a governess: to take me up without a cause was caprice, to drop me without a cause, is insult; therefore I say caprice and insult. It is caprice, for instance, inviting me in here, when I know you dislike me; and insult from your daughter, calling me impertinent—I, who have authority here to direct your hours and instructions while I stay—and you'll come down now, if you please, Miss Shadwell, and practice your duet."

Miss Marlyn spoke in a cold way, her beautiful face white with anger, and a steady fire gleaming from her eyes, as she rose from her seat, and, with a slight motion, indicated the door to Rachel.

"Authority!" repeated Mrs. Shadwell. "You forget, Miss Marlyn, that my daughter is quite past that age, and that I have never given you any such right."

"Oh, dear! I did not mean you, madam. I received it, of course, from Mr. Shadwell," said Agnes, with the same insolent smile.

"Your authority, I think, can hardly overrule mine, Miss Marlyn. I wish my daughter to remain here," said Mrs. Shadwell, gently, but with a slight flush in her cheek.

"I think, however, that I am doing my duty, madam, in desiring Miss Shadwell to come to her music. It would, of course, be much pleasanter for me to sit idle, reading my book."

"Do, pray mamma, tell her to leave your room," said Rachel, in her own way nearly as angry as Miss Marlyn.

"I shall be too happy to leave this room," said Miss Marlyn.

"Any thing so ridiculous!" exclaimed Rachel.

"But it shall be to ascertain on exactly what footing I really am placed while I remain here," continued Agnes Marlyn, and, with a courtesy, she left the room,

"Did you ever hear any thing so impertinent in your life?" exclaimed Rachel. "I could not believe my ears. I wonder, mamma, you did not order her out of the room."

"She was angry, darling, and very rude; but

I'm sure she will regret it, when she reflects a little," said Mrs. Shadwell.

"She's so ungrateful and odious! I could not have believed it of her. I suppose she's gone down straight to papa, to the library; he'll soon bring her to her senses—impudent creature!" said Rachel. "I wonder is it true that papa has not got money to pay her. I don't believe it, do you?"

"I don't know, darling, I can't say, I'm sure," said Mrs. Shadwell. "She is so angry just now, that she would say almost any thing; but it's only too possible, there is nothing more miserable than worries about money, but I ought not to complain; they press so much more on your poor papa, they have quite worn out his spirits. It is so miserable, this fine place and house, and all the rents passing through his hands, merely to pay interest on mortgages and annuities to strangers, and so very little left to us to live upon."

"Agnes Marlyn, talking in the odd rude way she sometimes used—I don't mean, of course as she did just now—said that papa did not know any thing about his own affairs; that he thought he had only twelve hundred a year clear, and that he might easily have sixteen or seventeen hundred more, and that there is nearly five hundred a year coming whenever an old gentleman, I forget his name, dies; so that we might hold up our heads again, if only we had sense to look after our own business."

"Did she, really?" said Mrs. Shadwell, and, for a moment, looking down in a pained meditation. She seemed to reflect on something different from an accession of wealth.

"Yes," said Rachel; "but it is not always easy to know when Agnes Marlyn is joking, and when in earnest."

Just as she reached this point the door opened, and Mr. Shadwell, followed closely by Miss Marlyn, entered the room.

CHAPTER LXV.

MISS MARLYN'S TRIUMPH.

Miss Marlyn had been weeping, and her handkerchief just touched her eyes, and was removed as she entered. Mark Shadwell looked pale and sternly on his wife and daughter, and said sharply, but slowly—

"I've merely looked in to say, that Miss Marlyn, being here as your instructress, Rachel, is by you, while she remains, to be obeyed."

At the last emphatic word he paused.

"Do you mind? *Obeyed*," he repeated. "I have no notion of any thing else, or of being plagued by your tempers and contradiction. I think, Miss Marlyn, you required her to go down to her music, didn't you?"

"I asked Miss Shadwell to come to her usual practice," said Agnes Marlyn, with a suffering air, in a very subdued tone. "I do not wish to have power, I hate it; I only wish to know what is required of me, if what I say is to be done, then I am accountable; but I should so much prefer to have none, to have no authority, no power, no right. You do not know, sir, how unhappy it makes me; I am so miserable, so [illegible]ed, so helpless."

A few tears fell here on Miss Marlyn's soft cheek, and her little speech suddenly broke down.

"Pray, don't distress yourself, Miss Marlyn. I insist that you shall be treated with proper respect while you remain here. You'll remember, if you please," he continued, addressing his daughter, "that you are to obey Miss Marlyn as your instructress, and to treat her as my guest, and in all respects as your own equal where she is not your superior—your equal in birth, your superior in attainments. Do you think it can be any pleasure to her listening to your discords and blunders at the piano, and performing the thankless task of teaching you? What do you mean? What are you dreaming of? Go down this moment; and while Miss Marlyn remains here, my direction to you is to obey her implicitly."

"But mamma was here," said Rachel, frightened, but also excited and angry; "and Miss Marlyn was extremely rude to her, and ordered me out of the room in the most insulting way, and wished to annoy mamma by doing so; and I always thought I should obey mamma, and not her, when mamma was by."

"Your mamma knows how to take care of herself, I hope—" began Mark Shadwell in a sterner tone.

"Oh, Mr. Shadwell, pray—pray do not consider me!" pleaded Miss Marlyn, pathetically. "I only wish to know what my duties are; it is so miserable any misunderstanding. I am always so unfortunate! Do, I implore, with me whatever Mrs. Shadwell likes best."

"You shall be respected here, Miss Marlyn," said Mark in a high tone.

"And so, I'm sure you think, should mamma," said Rachel. "And Miss Marlyn has been most impertinent to her, and overbearing to me."

"Oh! Rachel, darling! how can you say so?" exclaimed Miss Marlyn, with an appealing look.

But this little dialogue was peremptorily brought to a close by Mark Shadwell's commanding his daughter, with a stamp on the floor, to go instantly, as Miss Marlyn had already desired her, down stairs to her music.

As Miss Marlyn followed her pupil from the room, she stole a glance at Mrs. Shadwell strangely at variance with her recent tears—a look of lurking triumph and insult that stung her to the heart.

This sudden scene, more violent in action by force of its looks and tones than its mere dialogue thus set down would convey, was fruitful in feminine tears; not only were Agnes Marlyn's young cheeks wet, but Mrs. Shadwell wept and trembled.

She had been bullied, and mortified, and humbled before that insolent young lady, who had provoked that collision for the direct purpose of appealing to the partial judgment of her husband.

Oh! cruel, wicked girl, what had that poor sick lady done to provoke the torture of that triumph? Oh! Mark, Mark, she thought, how could you forsake the wife of your youth, and requite her unchanged adoration with that deep and ruthless perfidy?

"Oh, Mark!" she exclaimed; "oh, Mark! you don't know how you have wounded me. If you knew all you would not have slighted me so

before Rachel, and before that insulting, wicked girl."

And speaking this, for her, unparalleled invective, she threw her arms about her husband's neck, and wept passionately on that breast which her head had not lain upon for years. Mark was disconcerted for a moment, and placed his hand almost fondly on her head. But recollecting himself, he gently removed her, his hand still resting not unkindly on her shoulder. She was clinging to him, looking up with such an imploring agony, and her poor swollen eyelids and wet cheeks moved Mark for a moment with a feeling of compunction.

"Come, Amy!" he said, "don't let us have a scene all about nothing. You women are all made up of exaggerations; that *wicked* girl, as you call her, Miss Marlyn"—Mark's face as he looked down upon his wife was ghastly pale—"has, I think, simply done her duty, and so will you when you reflect. I can't, of course, say what you were all talking about before I came in. It's merely, so far as I can see, making mountains of mole-hills; but I'm quite certain—whether you had a scene or not before I came—that you will see the absurdity of treating this wretched little squabble as if it were something of—of importance."

"Oh! Mark, it *is* of importance! it is—it is—it is—you *know* it is; yes, darling, *very* important. Oh! Mark, do send her away, I implore of you; you don't know how miserable I am."

Mark was again disconcerted, perhaps agitated; but he affected to laugh.

"Come, come, Amy! you mustn't be foolish; you're not a child!"

"Oh, Mark darling! this isn't foolish. Oh, darling! do as I ask you, and you'll say it was wise."

"Well, of course, if you make it important, it *is* important," said Mark, with a sudden and odd change of manner. "There's a crisis in every thing. I *will* do as you say—she shall go. She leaves Raby to morrow morning. Long threatening comes at last, as old Wyndle says. I am utterly sick of this state of things."

"Don't blame me, Mark dear!"

"I blame no one; no, I know too well things come about of themselves, and—and I hate suspense. It was to be, I suppose, and it has come," said Mark.

"Thank you, Mark dear! I'm so grateful."

"Don't thank me; you needn't. You're not to suppose, because I don't talk about what's passing, that I don't see it. I have observed—I could not help it—how from having petted and caressed Miss Marlyn—making, perhaps, too much of her—you have come to hate her, and to show her that you hate her—caprice and insult" (how had he come to find these words?). "Of course, it's another worry; but I have resolved to put an end to the whole thing."

"I'm sorry you think I'm to blame; but, indeed, I'm not. And, Mark, there are some little jewels—I never wear them—and would it not be well to send them up to town and sell them, and that would make paying Miss Marlyn quite easy."

"That's my affair; no, keep them. You need not speak to Miss Marlyn. I don't wish another scene. I'll tell her to be ready to go by the two o'clock train to-morrow. She must leave this at eleven."

And so saying, Mark abruptly left the room. Amy Shadwell watched his departure with a strange alarm. There was more in the impression that remained upon her than the occasion seemed to warrant. A sinister presentiment terrified her.

The scene that had just agitated her, in her weak state, was followed by violent nervous palpitations, and intense hysterical excitement.

Very late that night Amy Shadwell, under the influence of a strong narcotic, lying in her husband's room, illumined only by a faint night-light, and the uncertain flicker of the fire, awakened she knew not how, saw her husband standing by her bed. Her face was turned from the light, which flickered dimly on his face, as he looked down closely into hers. His countenance was sorrow-stricken and sullen, she could see; and standing erect, his gaze unrewarded, for her features were quite in darkness, he sighed heavily, and remained looking down with the same dismal aspect, for awhile; then once more he stooped his face toward her, and whispered very low:

"Amy! Amy!"

In the action of the opiate she had taken there was something that resembled a luxurious catalepsy. With a sufficient effort of will, no doubt, she could have roused herself to reply, but the languor and serenity of her state held her in a drowsy spell. There was a dim sense of pleasure in protracting the unwonted scene. There was something of grief and tenderness in Mark Shadwell's countenance that held her in a strange suspense, and she watched his movements, and heard his words, with the curiosity that accompanies an interesting dream.

"Have I done her justice—have I understood her quite? Too late now," he said faintly.

And again he stooped down and gazed into her darkened face, and seemed to listen for her breathing.

"She's asleep—so best. Her lot is happier than mine!"

So saying, he walked gently to the fire-place, and stood there, looking ruefully into the embers.

She watched him with increasing intensity—her heart beat fast in the suspense. She expected him to return to her bedside; she debated within her own mind whether she should speak to him, but a sort of spell restrained her. He looked again, long and steadily, toward her. And now she saw his shadow on the wall moving—was it toward her? No—the door opened, and he was gone.

CHAPTER LXVI.

MARK SHADWELL LEAVES RABY.

MARK SHADWELL, when he closed the door of his wife's room, went direct to his own, where were candles burning. He opened his desk, and taking a letter from it, not yet folded, and written by his own hand, he read it through, and with the deep sigh and anxious look of a man still irresolute, he placed it in its envelope and sealed it.

The window of his room looked out upon the

yard in which Clewson, from his own, had seen Carmel Sherlock, on the memorable night of the murder, make his preparations for departure. There Mark Shadwell now saw a man busily getting a horse between the shafts of his tax-cart, while a portmanteau and bag lay on the ground beside the wheel.

Now Mark looked at his watch. He put on a loose coat and his hat, as he saw the vehicle get into motion to leave the yard. He put out the candles, and, with more caution than before, walked lightly through the gallery.

At the head of the great staircase stood the slender figure of Miss Agnes Marlyn. The moonlight entering through the great window on the landing showed her pretty form distinctly. She was dressed in her ordinary costume; there was no bonnet, no cloak, no sign of meditated flight. The lady in the gray, high-up dress, with the little bit of crimson ribbon showing like a wound at her breast, met his sudden and eager advance with a little sign of caution, her slender finger raised. He took the warning, checked his hurried step, looking over his shoulder. She glided a little way toward him, by the wall, against which leaning her shoulder lightly, and repeating her warning gesture, she awaited him.

The lowest and softest possible "hush!" she breathed rather than whispered. He would have taken her hand, but she withdrew it, with a gentle but decided gesture, and another "hush!" while the soft moonlight showed the faint knitting of her beautiful eyebrows, betokening caution.

"The letter?" she said, her fingers a little extended.

"Yes," said he, and placed in them the letter he had just taken from his desk.

She turned it toward the light of the moon—that emblem of purity—and read the address; it was—

"MRS. SHADWELL,
"RABY."

and in the left-hand corner the sternly marked initials "M. S."

"I'll put it in the Raby post-office as I go," said she, as she softly dropped it within the breast of her dress.

"Just so—yourself?" he answered.

"Myself?—yes," she repeated.

"Don't give it to any servant. Old Wyndle would get it, and know all about it; and just do as you said."

She nodded.

"And, so, good-bye," he whispered, hesitating. Had he ever seen that strange girl look so beautiful before?

She merely nodded again, raising her head a little, in the moonlight delicately beautiful—transparent—as a tinted statue.

"Not a word—nothing?" he whispered, lingering still in that fascination.

He extended his hand gently toward hers. She withdrew it again, merely whispering—

"Go!"

But, changing her mind before he turned, she took his hand, and pressed it tremblingly—vehemently—whispering—

"Good-bye! God bless you!"

Yes, "God bless you!" A benediction, an appeal to God; what a chaos in that mind!"

And she glided swiftly away into the dark.

With a strange pang of shame, rapture, agony, he gazed for a moment back through the familiar oak-carved arch into the darkness which shrouded from him a shattered home—an anarchy of past and future; the shapes of a dream wild and wicked—elation, fear, passion, retribution.

Drawing his coat about him now, he ran lightly down the stairs. The hall door was open, and the tax-cart stood there, and lean, wiry old Jem Truelock, who had served the squire's father before him, was standing by the horse's head, whip in hand.

"The things there?" said Mark, not thinking of his luggage, but reminded of it by seeing it there. "Shut the door, very gently."

"All right, sir."

"You see, Jem," said his master, as he took his seat and the reins beside him, "I'm forced to steal away for a bit. You are an old friend, so I don't mind telling you: I've got a hint—the beaks, you know. All settled in a week or a fortnight, though—running up to town to manage it. These d—d fellows will be down to-morrow, perhaps, and I shouldn't much mind if, among you, you managed to give them a devilish good licking. Get along!"

Jem smiled shrewdly, and nodded with a fierce wink, and a touch of his finger to his hat; and away they went. Was there any truth in this story? Not a word. Mark was angry at having to practice this meanness—a shabby deception—upon his own servant; angry and ashamed, and he felt that he was lying badly, and doubted whether the man believed him.

He lighted a cigar as they drove out of the dark avenue of Raby. He felt relieved as the gate closed behind him, and they emerged from the solemn groining of the huge old trees, upon the road and into the clear moonlight. He felt better, and his cheroot helped him to serenity.

He did not look back at Raby. He looked toward the sky, and the stars, and the distant hills, and warmed and soothed his thoughts with tobacco; every now and then applying a reflection he had taught himself, "No woman ever loved a man whom she could not understand, and she never understood me."

At Raby all was quiet until the gray of the late wintry dawn. It was to be a day of change. Miss Marlyn was to leave Raby at eleven o'clock; and perhaps the consciousness of this approaching relief made Amy Shadwell's waking happier that morning than it had been for many days before.

Rachel ran to her mamma's room.

"Papa had to go away all on a sudden last night to London," said she. "Jem Truelock drove him to the station—sudden business. Did he tell you?"

"No. I hope nothing bad—no. But he was here last night, and I fancy intended to speak to me. But though I saw him, that laudanum made me so drowsy that I did not say a word. I'll get up. I must go into the next room, and see old Truelock. I'm certain he told him; he tells Truelock every thing."

So Mrs. Shadwell got on her dresing-gown, and made a hasty toilet, and in her morning-room saw old Truelock, and cross-examined

him, she and Rachel, and he gave them a clear opinion upon the cause of his absence, founded on Mark's brief talk as they started, and he reminded her of another expedition on a similar occasion to London twelve years ago, which turned out all right in the end.

"Oh! yes, poor fellow! that must be it; that is certainly the cause. Old Truelock is so shrewd, he could not be mistaken, and Mark would not deceive him, he tells him every thing."

With these and similar reflections she chased away the vague alarms that still returned. Later in the morning in came old Wyndle.

"Well, ma'am, that French woman—Agnes Marlyn—has her things on ready to start, and glad and gay she seems, and I thought first 'twas no more than swagger; but it's more than that, I'm thinkin'; and I tell you what it is, ma'am, if I was you, I'd keep her a bit longer at Raby."

"I don't know what you mean, Wyndle."

"Only just that, my lady," said Wyndle, darkly. "I'd keep her here, and let the master send her away himself."

"Really, Wyndle, I don't understand you," said the lady, looking very hard at her, and a little agitated.

"Whiew! ma'am, she's a feather-pated wench, a wild dare-devil lass, wi' her brain half turned wi' vanities; and she was so forward—always pokin' after the master here, wi' her secretary stuff and nonsense, as if that giddy lass had a head for business, like poor Mr. Sherlock—God forgive him—had, and figuring and the like—not she; and if she goes away now, mind—God knows where she'll be going to."

"What *do* you mean, Wyndle?" said Amy Shadwell, sitting up in her bed, with a bright hectic in her cheek, for after a little talk in the next room with old Jem Truelock, she had lain down again, being still very ill.

"I know what I mean," said blunt old Wyndle mysteriously. "I don't trust them furriners."

"Oh! Wyndle, it's very wrong to speak of Miss Marlyn as you are doing, and as for your master, he's the soul of honor."

"Oh, yes!—I'm only meanin' her, ma'am. To be sure, she may be all very good and nice, but I'm an old woman, ma'am, and has seen more in my time than you, and I tell you, she doesn't like a bone in your skin, nor none of us: she hates us all; me because I see through her, an' you because 'appen you're a bit in her way."

"Oh! Wyndle, I really think you are going mad!" said Mrs. Shadwell, affecting incredulity, but feeling as if she were going to faint.

"Well, ma'am, there it is. I may be wrong, and I may be right; but anyhow, if I was in your place, ma'am, I wouldn't let her budge till master was here to write her discharge and pay her wi' his own hand—not a foot," said old Wyndle resolutely.

"But he has paid her; he paid Miss Marlyn yesterday: I have got her acknowledgment, and there is no such thing as a discharge needed—a governess does not require one. If she chooses to refer people to us, of course we'll say all we can for her, and I know nothing against her."

"Well, ma'am, if ye will ye will; an' what'll ye have for your dinner?" And so old Wyndle, with a disconcerting transition, passed abruptly to other matters, leaving her mistress, frightened and agitated, quite in the dark.

She sickened as she doubted whether the spirit of prudence might not have spoken in the coarse but kindly counsel of the privileged old servant. But what would Mark say or think if, on his return, he were to find Miss Marlyn still at Raby, under a countermand from its capricious mistress. So, as usually happens with irresolute people in a perplexity, it ended by her doing nothing.

It was between nine and ten o'clock, when a gentle tap came to Mrs. Shadwell's door, and, in obedience to her call, Miss Agnes Marlyn came in.

"I should not have thought of coming to bid farewell, Mrs. Shadwell, until you had sent for me; but I saw Mr. Shadwell for a few minutes before his departure, this morning very early." Miss Marlyn spoke very slowly. She liked, I believe, protracting this communication. "And he requested me particularly to place this note in your hand—and, accordingly—here it is."

So saying, she gave her Mark's letter—which she was to have dropped, by his direction, in the Raby post-office—with a dark, steady look, all the time, turned on Mrs. Shadwell's countenance. I am pretty certain that Miss Marlyn knew the contents of that letter perfectly, and that she had a fancy to witness its effect upon Mrs. Shadwell. In this, however, she was disappointed. Mrs. Shadwell glanced at the address, and felt very oddly. She laid it on the coverlet beside her, however, unopened, and she said gently—

"I suppose I am to say good-bye, now, Miss Marlyn—"

"You are very good," she said; "but I should not care to go till eleven; the waiting at the station would be so very long."

"Oh! dear—of course—I only meant to say good-bye now. I am very sorry that you seemed to misunderstand me—of late—and—and—we were not so happy—but I trust you may be very soon happier than you could ever have been in this triste place—and I wish you every good—

She fancied she saw the smile of a disdainful incredulity faintly playing at the corners of Agnes Marlyn's lips, and hardly perceptibly dimpling her soft chin and cheek.

"Yes, indeed, Agnes Marlyn, I do wish you all good and happiness; and although we have not been so happy for some time—I am sure it was neither my wish, nor my fault—I shall never forget your kindness and attention—until the unhappy change came—and if you think of any way in which I can be of use, you may rely upon me."

So saying, she extended her open hand on the coverlet to Miss Marlyn; but the young lady did not take it.

"I don't think it would be fair to think of giving you any trouble, Mrs. Shadwell. In fact I rather think and hope I shan't need any help. I don't, of course, count good wishes and prayers, for they really hardly involve any trouble; but you, I assure you, Mrs. Shadwell, on account of your health and every thing, are one of the very last persons on whom I should think it fair to impose the slightest real trouble on my account. Oh! no—thank you all the same, Mrs. Shadwell, very much."

"Well, Agnes—Miss Marlyn—good-bye," said Mrs. Shadwell; and again she extended her hand to take that of the young lady.

"Adieu, madam," said Miss Marlyn, in the sweetest, softest imaginable tone; and at the same time she made her the very prettiest, saddest little courtesy you could imagine; her beautiful eyes lowered to her tiny foot, not choosing, I think, to see Mrs. Shadwell's friendly gesture; and so she passed through the door that opened into Mrs. Shadwell's sitting-room, where she stopped—having closed the door—affecting to admire some early flowers, the bells of which she turned up caressingly with the tips of her fingers. She was listening, however, for what might be heard from the next room, expecting that Mrs. Shadwell would open her letter forthwith, and in this her anticipations were verified

CHAPTER LXVII.

BREAKING THE SEAL.

In some good natures a farewell is a forgiveness; and Amy Shadwell had experienced this unrequited softening at the moment when she was to look her last on Miss Marlyn. The door, however, had hardly closed upon her, when she opened her husband's letter, and read as follows:

"Amy:—I have long made up my mind to take a step which, however painful at the outset to you and to me, will ultimately, I am convinced, conduce to the happiness of both. We have been living together without sympathy and without confidence. This state of things was painful to me. I saw that it was painful to you. It was not in my power, nor in yours, to improve our unhappy relations. What imaginable good purpose, therefore, could have been consulted by continuing to practice what had ceased to be even an experiment, and had become a miserable hypocrisy? I am quite incapable of reproaching you with that for which you are in no way to blame. The entire incompatibility, not of tempers, but of sympathies and of tendencies, which had long separated us, had been seconded for years by the aggravations of ill health, and of incessant and harassing cares. Living under the same roof, we have for years been as effectually separated as if we had resided in separate cities; nay, worse, our occasional miserable meetings aggravated for each that sense of loneliness which was the root of our misery. I have left Raby, therefore, with the fixed and unalterable resolution of seeing it no more until the separation, which I am satisfied is essential to the happiness of each of us, shall have been legally and finally accomplished. Your own fortune shall return to you, together with such a portion of my wretched income as may be fairly awarded for your further support and that of Rachel. I have written on the subject to your former guardian and surviving trustee, General Hardwicke. You and Rachel must arrange to leave Raby. I should finally do so myself, but the state of the property compels my personal presence and care. Your arrangements shall be absolutely at your own disposal. I shall not, of course, interfere. Hardwicke will no doubt advise with you on any subject connected with the measure I have adopted. The cavils of a censorious and pharisaical world I utterly despise. I have taken the course which is best for both, and no expostulation can alter me.

"Mark Shadwell."

Holding the paper before her eyes with one hand, and with the other pressing her temple, with white lips she read the dreadful letter through. "My good God!" she exclaimed when she had read it through. And she attempted to begin it over again, but she was seized with such a trembling that she could not.

"Why—why—what does he mean? I can't make it out," she repeated, still pressing her hand to her temple, with that look of horrible incredulity which borders on idiotcy, and saying, "Where, where, call him," she got partly out of bed. But uttering a long, wild scream, she fell back in a violent convulsive fit.

Miss Marlyn, in the next room, heard the unearthly scream, and for a moment was scared. She would have returned and given an alarm, but she heard the bedroom door, at the other end of Mrs. Shadwell's room, open, and old Wyndle's voice—and then another hurried step entering.

From the distant door in the sitting-room, therefore, Miss Marlyn glided out upon the gallery, and down by the back stairs, and then round by the great staircase, to her own room, without passing again Mrs. Shadwell's door. There, pale and agitated, she sat down upon the side of her bed, with a beating heart, and listened, but could hear nothing. Then she opened her door, and stood at it listening again; but it was too far; and so she stole on and on, till she could hear old Wyndle's voice, and that of the maid; and so, by little and little, she drew near enough to the door to hear what was passing.

"She's getting out of it, God be praised!" said old Wyndle.

"Oh!—oh!—oh!" groaned Amy Shadwell's voice. "What is it—what is it? Something dreadful has happened."

"No, no, sweetheart; nothin'—nothin'—all quite right again; there now—there now—don't mind disturbin' yourself; just lie quiet; don't let her get out o' the bed at that side."

And then Mrs. Shadwell's voice said—

"Oh! this dreadful news! What is it? Poor Mark will be so shocked to hear it, when he comes in!"

"There—there now—there—my darling good lady!" said Wyndle's voice. "Don't let her sit up!" And so on; until, all on a sudden, the same appalling scream again thrilled Agnes Marlyn's ear, and she knew that the convulsions had returned.

She was frightened, and for a moment irresolute; but she turned to retrace her steps toward her bedroom, hearing, as she did so, the hurried talk of the frightened women, and the sounds of a terrible mute struggle.

Miss Marlyn sat down on the stairs very pale. She had not been there long, when Rachel, who had heard nothing of the scene now going on in her mother's room, came up. Quite disregarding the terms on which they had been, Agnes Marlyn stood up, and taking her by the arm, said—

"Rachel, I'm afraid Mrs. Shadwell's very ill. She's in her own room—you must send to Raby for the doctor."

Rachel ran to her mother's bedside, having entreated Agnes to send. When the doctor came, he found the poor lady hurried from one epileptic fit into another; and, in about an hour after his arrival, sudden symptoms of a fatal kind appeared; a vessel in the brain had given way, and the case was hopeless!

Miss Marlyn went into the room. The hour of her intended departure had long passed. She put a few questions to the doctor. She looked for a moment at the dying and unconscious lady, and then she said to Rachel—

"We must telegraph for your papa."

"He's gone to London, but we don't know where," said Rachel.

"No; he's in Birmingham, at Wycombe's Hotel. He told me he was going to stay there for some days," said Agnes Marlyn, reciting this solitary confidence with an evil pride, resulting from a strange mixture of feelings.

Old Wyndle looked at her savagely, and muttered to herself. But Agnes Marlyn, with a calm, pale face and collected manner, went down stairs and wrote a message for the telegraph office to Mark Shadwell.

"Mrs. Shadwell is dying. Return to Raby instantly."

She hesitated; she would not be herself the sender of this message; it would associate her in his mind with a shock with which she would not connect herself. The drawing-room door was open, and as she stood musing, with the paper in her fingers, she saw the doctor, and went into the hall, as he was getting his hat and coat.

"Don't you think, sir, that Mr. Shadwell should be sent for?" she said.

"Certainly; telegraph," he said.

"From what I am told, sir, I am afraid this message says no more than truth?"

And Miss Marlyn placed what she had written in his hands.

"Too true; but he'll not be in time—Birmingham's a good way: he'll not find her living," said he, with a shake of his head.

"But he ought to be here," said Miss Marlyn, decisively; "will you sign this?—we'll find a messenger here."

So the doctor signed it, and filled in dates, and so forth.

"She'll be gone before an hour, poor little thing! She was the nicest creature, I think, I ever met almost."

So the doctor went, and Miss Marlyn saw old Jem Truelock, and with the fresh horse that was to have brought her to the station, away he rode with his message.

Mark Shadwell's letter, which the maid had seen in Agnes Marlyn's hand as she entered Mrs. Shadwell's room, was found on the counterpane, and old Wyndle took it.

Late that evening the Rev. Stour Temple called. He had heard the sad news, and rode over, not knowing that Mark was away. Rachel had fallen into that deep sleep which succeeds grief and excitement, and is the closing compensation for that frightful suspense. Old Wyndle had her voluble and bitter story to tell.

"She was better this morning than I saw her for two years or more, when in came that Agnes Marlyn, wi' this letter in her fist—Jane Cherry saw her, before ten o'clock—and I picked up the letter off the quilt. It's from the master—God forgive him!—telling her he'd come back no more—he left last night—but the two that God had joined together should be sundered and separated by law; and that letter was the death o' her; and here it is—I can't make much o't myself—but you must read it, and see how it is wi' poor Miss Rachel."

After a few more questions, therefore, he did read that shocking letter; and, after a long silence, he said that he would call again next day—having considered the matter carefully meanwhile—and see and talk with Rachel.

Late that night Mark returned. He knew by the face of the servant who opened the door, that his wife was dead.

He heard the short tale in silence. There was a sense of recovered liberty; there was something of remorse; also intense shame, which tortured his pride, and made him uneasy in the presence of his own servants.

Sullen as a wounded beast, Mark Shadwell made his way to his bedroom, where, not in sleep nor in prayer, but in an agitated hurry of thought and emotion, he passed a long and troubled night.

When Stour Temple called next morning, and learned that Mark Shadwell had arrived, he contented himself with inquiries at the door and did not ask to go in.

Wyndle in her own way had told him something of Miss Marlyn's movements. The more he heard of that young lady's doings, the less he liked or trusted her. It pained him that she should be at Raby. Still he hoped that it was but the confusion of this sudden death that had postponed her departure. There were suspicions afloat in his mind which he would not have liked to tell to any body.

Rachel was past the strange curiosity of childhood. She could not bring herself to look at her dead mother and companion. She lay sobbing on her bed, now and then reading more serenely in her Bible, and then, as the truth—incredible for a moment—returned, bursting into a wild convulsion of weeping again.

Old Wyndle often looked in, and stood or sat by her bed, talking in her own rough, quaint way. But now she had gone, and, with Jane Cherry, the house-maid, was busy in poor Mrs. Shadwell's room.

And now their sad office was ended, and she lay, cold and sad, in the white robes of her purity.

The blinds were lowered, the room darkened, and old Wyndle, having sent Jane Cherry away, remained for a few minutes, looking with rueful and bitter thoughts upon the young, forlorn face, with the light of a wonderful smile upon it.

There came a low tap at the door, and, expecting to see Jane Cherry come in, Wyndle walked a few cautious steps toward the door, and in a low tone, such as is heard in sick-chambers, she bid the visitor come in.

It was not Jane Cherry who entered, but Agnes Marlyn. The old housekeeper, very erect, made one step backward, and a silence of some moments followed.

"And ye've actually come in!" exclaimed old Mrs. Wyndle, with a strange gasp, and her arms across, the fingers of one at the elbow of the other, and a gaze dark and stern, as if she had seen an evil spirit in the room.

"Mrs. Wyndle, you'll please not to speak to me," said the young lady, coldly. "Once for all, I come here at your master's desire, to lock these drawers, and wardrobes, and boxes," she said with a stern deliberateness, "and to take charge of the keys for him. I shall do my duty, whatever other people may. Will you be good enough to move a little aside, and let me reach that wardrobe?"

"I don't believe the master ever sent ye in here, nor desired ye no such thing," said old Wyndle, pale and trembling.

"Come — come, Mrs. Wyndle; you must know it can't be pleasant to any one coming in here."

And, turning suddenly on the old woman, with eyes that flashed, she added—

"What can you propose to yourself, woman, by trying to quarrel with me?"

"No, bad as he's bin, I can't believe that of him," said the old servant, sturdily.

"Bad as he has been!" repeated Miss Marlyn. "Why, you ungrateful old woman—of what use on earth are you? If he had not been a great deal too kind, you'd have been in the work-house long ago. There—do, for goodness sake, just be decently quiet."

That brilliant, beautiful girl, with a strangely heightened color and flashing eyes, pushed by her, locked the wardrobe, locked the drawers, gathered up some rings, chains and trinkets that were on the dressing-table.

"Look here, please," she said. "I place them in this box."

Old Wyndle only lifted up her hands and eyes, and said, "Oh! my mistress—my poor, little, good mistress!—did I live to see this day?"

Carrying her head high, and angrier than she cared to show, Miss Marlyn proceeded to lock up every thing that seemed of any value.

Then said Miss Marlyn coldly, "He said particularly, there's the—a gold ring, and a diamond guard on her finger."

"Her weddin'-ring! Oh! master!—the ring you put on her finger!" She was speaking almost in a scream. "Oh! Mr. Shadwell—oh, *man!* could ye let her fingers on it?"

"There's a guard-ring, too—a brilliant-hoop—that he says I must take."

"Take them! Touch her? Touch her hand? My God, you would not dare to touch her!" shrieked old Wyndle.

"Take them off yourself—why, that's what I said," exclaimed Miss Agnes Marlyn, with a very wicked look at the old woman, though in a calm voice.

"Oh! my poor mistress! — my darling! — angel bright!" cried old Wyndle, standing at the foot of the bed, with her hands clasped, and tears trickling down her cheeks. "To think such things could be! No—no—I say! I'll take 'em off wi' my own old fingers, and I'll put them in the hand that gave them—the hand she loved—the hand that laid her there; but you shan't touch them or her. Yes, my darling!—ye'll give 'em up—gentle—gentle—like your beautiful self. Look at her! Ye've killed her. Look at her there—the poor, little thing! Arn't ye afeard she'd stand up like an angel, and strike ye wi' a look o' her white face? Look — look, woman — look! Lyin' there, wi' the light o' heaven on her face—murdered by ye! To think o't! Why does God *stan'* such things? She—the blessed creature, simple and lovin', that wouldn't hurt a fly, as meek as a little child—a little child!—may the thunder o' God strike them that did it—gone—ye poor, little thing! and you that done it—there, to see! standin' on yer two feet, hale and strong, and happy—my God!—and full o' life. But she's the upper hand o' ye still: she's raised in power—better off than the best o' you, with her crown incorruptible and robes of white—to tell her story before the throne. Oh! look at the poor, grieved little face of her—you cruel, dreadful creature!"

"I never was any thing in my life but kind to her, you stupid, wicked old woman. Look at her!—why shouldn't I? I've done my duty by her better than ever you did, who never did any thing of any earthly use. Of course I'll look at her."

And with a quick step she came by the bed-post at the foot of the bed, and, with a bright flush and a strange defiance, did look on that saddest and most angelic sight vouchsafed to mortals.

When Miss Marlyn left the room, old Wyndle grimly shut the door after her, and stood at the foot of the bed, thinking.

"I see how 'twill be—I a' seen it long enough. I can see a bit still, though my old head's little good for thinkin' now; but think I must—if I don't, who will?—about the poor lassie, Rachel. I'll set my wits to work on't, and 'appen counsel may come; and so it will, for God can't mean to leave his creature, without help or care, to them that'll grudge her her bit and sup, and the clothes on her back!"

CHAPTER LXVIII.

MARK SHADWELL TAKES A DECIDED STEP.

GOOD-NATURED as old Wyndle was, she had a proper regard for herself, and her thoughts naturally turned to her own future, a subject which the changes she saw at hand involved in utter uncertainty.

She was recalled, however, by fancying that she heard Agnes Marlyn's voice in the gallery. She looked on the still, pale face before her, and a gush of kindly recollections and bitter feelings found vent in a flood of tears.

Drying them hastily, and half hoping to meet Miss Marlyn, she issued from the room, closing the door reverently. But she did not encounter that young lady on her way to Rachel's room, which, without ceremony, she entered.

Though not undressed, Rachel lay on her bed with her face to the pillow, you would have said in a deep sleep, had it not been for a convulsive sob every now and then.

"Get up, miss," said old Wyndle, sternly, laying her hand on her shoulder; "this is no house for you."

The young lady sat up on the side of the bed, like a person called up from a swoon, and looked in old Wyndle's face, without speaking.

"Mind ye, miss," said old Wyndle, inspired ·ith sudden decision, "ye don't stay here; ye ust come wi' me, and look your last on your oor mamma, and then go ye straight to Miss larbara, down at the vicar's."

"Hold your tongue, Wyndle," said a stern oice, near the door. "Come, rouse yourself, Rachel, and listen to me."

Old Wyndle, with half a glance, saw Mark hadwell standing within the shadow of the door.

"Ah!" groaned old Wyndle bitterly, shaking er head slowly.

"Do you hear me, Rachel? Collect your houghts," he repeated.

"Oh! yes—papa—papa!" And she caught im in a wild embrace, and lay close to his breast, obbing, and straining him in her girlish arms.

He had not expected any such thing. This sud-en burst of affection disconcerted and pained him.

"Go, Wyndle," said he, sternly. "Miss Ra-hel will ring for you when she wants you. Shut the door."

"Sit down, Rachel—command your feel-ngs—and attend to what I say, which shan't be nuch," he said, leading her to a chair.

"And first, you must not allow that impertinent, ungrateful old woman, Wyndle, to talk to ou about my plans, as they affect you or myself; nd, also, I request that you'll not make a con-idante of her. When you know as much of the vorld as I do, you'll learn that old persons in ier rank are pushing and prying, conceited and fficious, and must be kept in their proper places. Vyndle is a prejudiced, impudent old woman, nd I don't choose any confidences with such a erson; d'ye mind? And, Rachel, as to your-elf—ourselves, I mean. I must run up to town orthwith, to consult about business; my stay nd visits here, in fact, must be uncertain, and nay be interrupted by very long intervals. Miss Marlyn and you don't get on pleasantly, and, even if she could remain in her late position, she s too young to take charge of you, and, the fact s, I must look about for another home for you—or the present, at least—for the idea of leaving ou here, at Raby, alone, is quite out of the ques-ion; and, at the same time, I wish, of course, o consult your feelings in making a choice. I am sure Miss Temple, so old a friend, would be glad to have you at the vicarage, if you liked it, and I could arrange. And—think it over, and tell me to-morrow whether you would like it—or any other arrangement better; only, you see, staying here is not to be thought of, and whatev-er is to be done, must be arranged immediately."

He got up gloomily, and stooping over her, touched her forehead with a cold kiss, and then left the room.

In a few days this arrangement was actually made. I need hardly say that Mark Shadwell had first ascertained that Charles Mordant had rejoined his regiment—and Rachel Shadwell found herself, to the great delight of kind Miss Barbara, domesticated at the vicarage.

Miss Marlyn at the same time left Raby, and honest Roger Temple, like the captain in the song, "lost his spirits daily," and moped about and sighed, and grew to be a silent man; and one day, walking with Doctor Stalton toward Wynderfel, less because he affected the doctor's company than because he loved a stroll in that particular direction, the doctor said—

"Miss Marlyn has left Raby some time—the same day that Miss Shadwell came to the vicarage."

"Oh?" said Roger, interrogatively; for though he knew the fact only too well, he wished to hear more on that tender theme, and so tried to lead the physician on.

"Devilish pretty, whatever else she may be," continued the doctor, knowing nothing of poor Roger's little secret.

Roger sighed, and looked down, in soft and silent expectation, on the grass, as they walked along.

"Mark Shadwell is still at Raby," resumed the doctor; "but I'm afraid that d—d woman has got fast hold of him."

Roger Temple felt as if the doctor had unintentionally given him a hard box in the ear; he was stunned, tingling, but could not resent it. In secret he conned it over, and grew frightened and sadder.

Time, the healer, the destroyer, the constructer, had been working his potent changes.

The doctor's remark about Miss Agnes Marlyn and Mark Shadwell, expressed pretty distinctly the surmises of the little town of Raby and its neighborhood. And soon the scandal darkened.

Mark had now been for many weeks absent from the country. No letter had reached Raby, or the vicar, or his attorney at the village for all that time.

At length there arrived a letter from Mark Shadwell to the vicar, which surprised that rustic clergyman a good deal. It was a long letter for a lazy man like Mark, and was written, it seemed, in dejection.

It began by assuming that Stour Temple would not be much surprised if he, Mark Shadwell, acted as most men do when, in middle life, placed in his sad and solitary circumstances. His ideas of right and wrong, and those of the vicar, though drawn from different sources, were very much alike, in fact, in most points identical; and the step he was going to take, after the most careful consideration of what was best and most proper, was one, he was confident, which the vicar would thoroughly approve. He was about, in fact, to marry. He was a man of few acquaintances, and he did not care to look up any of his old London friends. A wife educated in that atmosphere would never do at Raby. What was needed there was a person who could content herself with plain clothes, plain fare, servants few and clumsy, and no society, and who, in addition to all this, could make herself positively useful to a man who had often more business to look after than two men could be reasonably expected to get through. Would the vicar mention all this to his sister, and consult with her as to how best to open it to Rachel. Girls are so odd, and in these circumstances so seldom see what is really so much for their own advantage. But where there was a temper—and Rachel had one of her own—they run away with things, and required to be reasoned with; and so he would kindly use his discretion in communicating this news to Rachel. He would, for his daughter's sake, advise her denying herself an indulgence in that anger and jealousy on this occasion, to which women are prone—which affect a higher inspiration, but are, in fact, so narrow, selfish, and vulgar.

Such was the tenor of the letter.

"Who can it be?" said Barbara, looking hard at the vicar, as they conferred, in his study, over the letter.

The vicar did not return her dark look of inquiry or conjecture, but looked on the letter which he held in his fingers.

"He does not say," said the vicar; "we shall know, time enough. I hope he has made a wise choice."

"Ah, poor Amy!" murmured Miss Barbara Temple. "Such idolatry! So soon forgotten!"

She did not know the story of the letter that was found upon poor Amy's bed, nor did Rachel. Old Wyndle had spelled through a part of it without comprehending its exact meaning. Rachel had looked at it—no more, for her mind was distracted with another panic at the time when she saw it; and except that it was an unkind letter, she remembered nothing very distinctly of it. It lay in the vicar's desk—one of those secrets of other people which he always kept religiously.

"Ah! my poor Amy! Well—well, how such things can be, I don't understand!" murmured Barbara.

The news was told to Rachel very kindly and briefly by the vicar that evening, Miss Barbara being present, who hugged and kissed Rachel vehemently when the story was over, and spared no sympathy, indignation, or consolation.

I sometimes think that the more despotic and selfish parents are, the more they are revered and admired by their children. It is one of those strange perversities and injustices which appear in the laws of human nature. Rachel cherished for her father an awe and veneration which a better man might have failed to inspire. She wept over this intelligence in the despair and tribulation of youth, which however are transitory.

Then came conjectures as to whom he had selected for his wife. Miss Barbara listened reservedly to these speculations, for she had a pretty decided opinion upon the point, aided by scandal which of course had not reached Rachel's ear.

In a little while, however, it was established, and past the period of debate. The bride was Miss Agnes Marlyn, and she came down with her husband to Raby, and forthwith began with rapidity and decision to remodel the household. One by one the old servants were removed, and new ones came in their places. Mr. Twinley, the attorney, spoke of her reservedly as "a very clever woman," and "a lady who would, if any one could, make the estate pay."

The new Mrs. Shadwell was looking more beautiful than ever, and appeared in the squire's pew in Raby Church, dressed very richly, but in excellent taste. But rumors had preceded her, and a great scandal had traced a circle round her, and she was isolated.

She was not a person, however, to forego an object without an effort. As the wife of Shadwell of Raby, she was, in some respects, the first lady of her county. That she should be snubbed by such people was really too good!

But though she tried patiently and many ways, by taking a graceful interest in the charities of the neighborhood, by visiting the girls' school, by looking in upon the sick-room of old Martha Cripps, and by fifty other expedients, she failed to make any way with the ladies whom she was disposed to know. They were shy—they did not visit her.

She did not acquiesce in these relations. But she saw that she must wait and proceed circuitously. If only the clear income of Raby could be got up to three thousand a year—and that, she thought, was quite on the cards before four years were over—with Mark Shadwell's connections he should have a seat in the House, and make a fresh start in the great world. Then these mean little people of Raby and the vicinity would have their eyes opened, and be made to see things as they were. This would be beginning at the right end, and Agnes would pay those small people off when the proper time came.

The vicar painfully reconsidered the whole case. The recent rumors to which I have referred were unpleasant; but he found no proof of them. The stories about the French school were better supported; but, after all, they proved no more than extreme giddiness, and were, in some measure, attributable to the mad spirits and inexperiences of a school-girl; and must he not assume that Mr. Shadwell—a proud and fiery man—had satisfied himself upon these points? and had he any right, upon mere conjecture, to go behind his mature decision? And if his clerical position obliged him to special reserves, did it not also exact special charities?

The result was, that Miss Barbara paid a visit; but Rachel did not come. The vicar had reasoned with her to make the effort, but she would not, and his sympathies were with her.

Mark Shadwell saw Miss Barbara after she had paid her cold and embarrassed visit, as she crossed the hall, and talked to him there for a few minutes, and then asked sharply where Rachel was. So Barbara, with a feminine dexterity, pleaded for her young friend, hiding altogether the fiery element which had mingled in her refusal to come to Raby, and urging only the pain of reviving so recent a grief and other similar apologies, in which Mark, unsatisfied, darkly acquiesced.

So the good old lady took her leave of him at the steps, and drove away, with an unpleasant conviction that Mark understood only too well the spirit in which his daughter had stayed away, and resented it fiercely.

It was about this time that Captain Clayton returned from Scotland. He put up at the comfortable little inn at Raby, and passed his days at "the great house" as before. Agnes Shadwell took up the idea of his marrying Rachel with energy. Clayton opened his rental and his plans to Mark Shadwell, who, in consequence, walked over in the afternoon to the vicarage, and paid his respects to Miss Barbara. Honest Roger had made an agitated exit by the back door as Mark arrived at the steps. Mark Shadwell saw and spoke to Rachel, who trembled a great deal, and for a long time could hardly control the hysterical gush of tears which were every moment at the point of bursting forth.

It was a short but tedious visit. He had something to say, however, and on taking his leave he made Rachel accompany him as far as the little brook on the way to Wynderfel.

CHAPTER LXIX.

PLAIN LANGUAGE.

RACHEL was very much frightened as she walked beside her father, who maintained an unbroken and a stern silence till they reached the stile under the gentle hill of Wynderfel.

"I shan't trouble you to come farther; just sit down there, or stand, if you like it better, and listen to what I have to say."

She did not sit on the broad plank of the stile, but stood looking at him with a face of awe and large and frightened eyes.

"As you don't like coming to Raby—your friends here at the vicarage, I am sure, must admire your spirit vastly—I have asked you to accompany me here. Mind, I don't want you to come to Raby. I quite understand the petty malice which, under fine names, indulges itself in inflicting what it conceives to be mortifications; under such circumstances it is a great pleasure to women, and I hope it does them good. Not a word, please. I don't care a farthing, mind; it's nothing to me, absolutely, or to—to any one else. You have got your four thousand pounds, and you are independent of me; you can do what you like, what your friends here advise you; but my consent, by the settlement, is necessary."

He paused. She was looking at him half bewildered. "I say, by the terms of the instrument, the deed, which gives you that provision, you forfeit it the moment you marry without my consent; do you quite understand?"

"Yes, sir; yes, papa," whispered Rachel, with a gasp, and looking as frightened as her worst enemy, if she had any, could wish her.

"You need not look so stupid, then. Should any of the wiseacres about the vicarage, there—the people whom you choose to consult and trust—persuade you to marry that very impudent and foolish young man, Charles Mordant, you will do precisely the thing which I forbid, and one guinea you shan't get. You'll find that by that spirited act you will have disappointed the religious, primitive people up there—left yourself without a shilling—improved my estate to the extent of four thousand pounds, and let that charming young man, who knows, I presume, the value of money, in for a very romantic and disinterested adventure."

In spite of her alarm, a flush of crimson dyed Rachel's cheeks as her father spoke. She remained standing, and perfectly silent.

"Well, so much for romance, and—and contempt of my wishes; and I have left a note for Stour Temple, telling him shortly those facts. So that any one who aids in accomplishing that folly will have done so, at all events, with their eyes open."

He paused, and there was a little silence, in which Rachel felt utterly confounded, and the croon and gurgling of the little brook close by filled her ears with a strange distinctness.

"And now, the other part. I don't mean to reason with you, observe. I'm simply putting facts before you; and if you decline to act according to common sense, it's all the better, in one sense, for me. Captain Clayton, whom you saw sometime ago—every day for a month—likes you; he has returned to Raby for a time, and I see him, as before, every day. He has spoken to me, and satisfied me that there is nothing in point of prudence against it. Quite the reverse—very advantageous, indeed, and with extremely good prospects, that proposal is now before you; if you choose to accept it, you have my entire approval; but one word more, I won't talk about it at present. I won't take your answer now; you had better think it over, and all the consequences. He knows your friends, the Temples, and will very likely look in to-morrow afternoon, and speak to you himself—that is, if they choose to give him an opportunity, and that you like the idea; but I wished to tell you exactly all about it, and how I view the subject; not because I suppose my opinion of any weight—in fact I don't care a farthing whether it is or not—but because I wish you to understand the exact effect of acting under ill advice in this matter, or indulging an idiotic and unworthy fancy, for which there is not even the miserable excuse that you see, or are ever likely to meet the object of it; for he is in India, and very well content to live there without troubling his head about you."

As soon as he had said that, Mark Shadwell went away. Whether her father kissed her at parting she could not remember, nor how he looked at her. For some time, with a dreadful sense of suffocation, she stood still, and at length her excitement and anguish found relief in a convulsive burst of tears.

An hour after she told, as well as she could, all that had passed to Barbara Temple. And they cried together in Rachel's room for more than an hour. Then Barbara, in the evening, communicated the matter to the vicar, who was pained and helpless. What could these good people do but speak, not even comfortably, but only kindly, to the poor girl.

The next morning a note was dispatched by the vicar to Mark Shadwell, saying a great deal to the point, and with a very moderate expenditure of words. He knew that Mark Shadwell would excuse his writing, as Rachel was so distressed and agitated that she felt herself unequal to write as she would wish, and had begged of him to say that the proposal of Captain Clayton had come upon her by surprise—that she had never looked on him as a possible suitor, and could never consent to view him in that light, and a great deal more that was deprecatory and dutiful; but quite clear and decided on the point that she could not listen to Captain Clayton's suit.

Mark was intensely angry. Clayton was at the breakfast-table with him and his wife, displaying, his suspense considered, a wonderfully good appetite, when the vicar's note was handed to Mark; he took it to the window, exchanging a glance with his guest, and there read it.

Very angry, under one of his bitter impulses, he said, with a kind of laugh—

"I've had my answer, and there it is."

At the same time he presented the note open to Clayton, who said, as he took it, looking toward Agnes—

"Am I to read this?"

"Certainly," said Mark. "They intend it, evidently."

Clayton did read it. He looked annoyed, but by no means so much moved as Mark.

His beautiful young wife was the only one of

the party who talked much during the time they continued at the breakfast-table, and seemed quite as gay and happy as usual. About an hour later, however, alone with her husband, she said a little tartly—

"What possessed you to show him that letter?"

"It won't make the least difference," said Mark. "Those Temple people have got fast hold of her; it's quite enough thinking I wish it."

"You give up things too easily. Clayton can be of immense use to us. You must be in Parliament; you forget your own plans—every thing—when you grow angry," his wife rejoined.

"My giving up or not has nothing to do with it; that rests with him, not me, and as to hiding it from him, that would all be very well if Stour Temple weren't sure to make him out before he goes, and tell him all about it," answered Mark Shadwell, moodily.

"Well, leave him to me; he must not be allowed to think her answer final, he must be kept on; he must come back to Raby. I dare say all will go right in a little while. I'll talk to him by and by, and you need not say a word more about it."

Instead of his intended walk to the vicarage, Clayton joined Mark Shadwell in a ramble to the woods, which was made short, however, by the early winter night-fall. In the drawing-room that evening, before he bid good-night and went away to his inn in the village, Agnes had a long talk with him, Mark affecting to be busy in writing some notes. Next day, again, in the drawing-room, she had a very long farewell interview with Clayton.

The result of her persuasions was that he would return to Raby in the autumn. Mark was pleased. He knew that earlier he could not come. He had to join his sister, now at Naples, where she was to winter. Then northward for the summer, and to be joined by her mother in October, who was to relieve him, and having regained his liberty, to Raby he would return.

At Raby time moved slowly. Mark had his fits of gloom, more abrupt and more terrible perhaps than ever; but also more transient. His young wife watched him with an observant eye. She was always cheerful, and nearly always in an amiable temper. Her influence upon him was gradually developing itself. An artful, clever woman could have little difficulty in managing that vain, proud man.

"So you write to Clayton?" said he one day, as the autumn which was to bring him back again to Raby approached, tapping an envelope addressed in his handwriting to her, which lay upon her desk.

"Write to Clayton? I should think I do; how else could we know whether he is coming."

Mark extended his fingers toward Clayton's envelope, but his wife, laughing, took it up, and popped it into her desk.

"Is he jealous? How delightful," said she, with a little laugh.

"Well, no! He's not quite such a fool," said Mark; "but what does Clayton say, for I really am curious?"

"He says he will certainly be at Raby in October," she answered.

"In two months," said Mark, ruminating. He was thinking whether it might not be well to prepare Rachel for his return. And something of this he hinted to Agnes.

She laughed.

"Don't be vexed; but I understand her better, I'm afraid, than you do. I don't think she really cares about Mordant, and I'm quite sure that if she did not think that you and I both wished her to marry Clayton, she would marry him; but she does think it, and the less time she has to think it over the better. She thinks of course that I'm at the bottom of it, and she hates me. I have never given her any cause, but one."

Suddenly her tone changed from one almost of gayety to one of sadness, and her fine eyes filled with tears; "and that for all the world I would not undo."

As she said this, looking up fondly, she folded her hands about his arm, and he stooped and kissed her very tenderly.

"Never mind; I love you only the more, the more ungracious they all are. I know how dull this life is, but fortune will yet make us amends, and I shall see you where you ought to be;" and kissing her again, he walked down, in a sudden access of energy, to the little town of Raby, where he had an interview with his attorney, who, pleaded in excuse for dilatoriness, that he had not got full instructions yet, and brought out a bundle of papers, and spread them before his client.

A few days afterward the attorney, happening to meet the vicar on the Applebury road, said, after some little talk—

"There was a matter I thought I might as well give you a hint of, but you must not let Mr. Shadwell know, I rely for that on your honor—you'll promise?"

The vicar assented.

"Well. He made no settlement," said the attorney, in an under-tone, "on his recent marriage, but he's going to deal with his property now, and, you know, there's his daughter, poor Miss Shadwell, and she ought to be considered; he ought not to put every thing out of his power for the advantage of the present Mrs. Shadwell, and he has powers which, under a well-considered settlement, he ought not to have had; and, as you take an interest in the poor young lady, I wished to give you a hint that you may put in a word for her, if you have an opportunity, naturally, you know, only you must not let him suspect that you got it from me."

Here was a new uneasiness, and what could the vicar do?

CHAPTER LXX.

THE DAGGER HALF UNSHEATHED.

Mark Shadwell was still enamored of his young wife. He had reason to admire her cleverness. For the first time a gleam of hope pierced the darkness that overhung him. Mr. Twinley, the Raby attorney, has often said that he never met a professed accountant who could match that girl in disentangling complications, and reducing confusion to order. But her genius for figures was but one of her curiously-admirable faculties for business. Than the management of that large portion of the Raby estate

which was in Mark's hands, nothing could have been more slobbering and wasteful; all this underwent a keen and wise revision, and the result was an immediate saving of several hundreds a year. The two mills of Drimsworth, that had been locked up for nearly three years and were falling to decay, within four months had tenants. All the leases were carefully overhauled. In several that had expired, and were held from year to year, it was found that the holdings were under-measured, and immediate accessions to the rental were the result. It would be tedious to enumerate the various operations of the new and active régime which began with the accession of the second Mrs. Shadwell.

Had no one at Raby eyes or brains till this young lady arrived among them? No doubt there was no lack of either. But the attorney only knew the state of things in glimpses and patches, as isolated cases came before him, and Carmel Sherlock, clever and rapid at accounts, had no turn for business, and Mark Shadwell—though not deficient, perhaps, in talents of another kind—was indolent and incapable in this.

The result was an immediate improvement in Mark Shadwell's income, and a prospect of a much larger one to be effected in the course of some half-dozen years. So Mark began to hold up his head, and it is not wonderful if he built castles in the air, or if his clever wife constructed several for his habitation. For she was resolved to get her husband on in the world, and was not a person to allow the grass to grow under her feet.

In his library, in the lower part of his escritoire, lay a square parcel of books, papered and corded, which Carmel Sherlock, a few days before his death, had himself made up and directed to him.

It was a heavy parcel, for Sherlock's few books were folios. Mark fancied that there were papers in it besides. He had often weighed it in his hand, and every time he opened the part of the escritoire where it lay, he read the address.

A faint curiosity each time prompted him to open it, and a reluctance, intuitive and superstitious, restrained him. Carmel Sherlock was such an odd fellow. There was probably one of his mystical letters there. They amused Mark, it is true, but in those follies there was a half-defined second meaning that teased and depressed him. In his fun was a *gout de revers*, and his laughter and derision sounded with an echo like the mirth in old Red Gauntlet's spectral hall, and scared him secretly. He had come to look on this parcel with a sort of helpless dislike and suspicion.

This day it caught his eye, as usual. He was tired of its silent upbraidings. So, yielding to the momentary temptation to know the worst, he pulled it out of its hiding-place and put it on the table. Carmel Sherlock was about to speak. Mark Shadwell cut the string.

Some rubbishy old folios, as he had expected, emerged. He opened and shook them with their backs upward, but no letter dropped out.

A few papers remained. One contained some valuable hints as to how to make use of two ledgers in his room, so as to facilitate the keeping of the Raby estate accounts.

A smaller one was folded in blank paper, and contained a large closed envelope addressed to "Miss Agnes Marlyn,—Private."

Mark did not hesitate to open this, and he found this note addressed, in Carmel Sherlock's hand, to the lady who was now his wife:

"Miss Agnes Marlyn:—I return hereby the note you asked me to give to Sir Roke Wycherly on the night when he lost his life. That being impracticable I now return it unopened, as you gave it to me. Your messenger was faithful—but the other messenger, Death, outstripped Yours, Carmel Sherlock."

"The d—d fool!" said Mark, between his set teeth; but whether he meant Carmel or his own wife, I can't say.

Enclosed was a tiny note, sealed and addressed "Sir Roke Wycherly," but the writing was so disguised that Mark could not recognize a resemblance to that of his wife. It was rather a dark day, and Mark drew toward the window, and carefully opened and read this little note.

It contained but three or four lines. Here was his wife's handwriting without any disguise. It would not, probably, have done to leave Sir Roke at all in doubt as to its identity, and it had the initials "A. M." at its foot.

These lines were very significant. Mark looked pale with anger as he read them. He thrust the little note into his coat-pocket, sneering. The servant crossing the hall saw his pale face over the banister, as he came down, and knew that something had gone wrong.

"Your mistress in the drawing-room?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, well, that will do," said Mark, as if he would have sent him anywhere else.

His beautiful young wife sat at her writing-table, deep in a letter, when Mark entered. In the isolation of that drawing-room, never now entered by a female visitor, she sat. She looked up at Mark with a rather bored expression, and turned her letter with its face downward.

"Oh, I've interrupted you!" he said, a little dryly.

"Not much—what is it?"

"It is only a letter like that, which was intended to turn its face downward when I came near," he answered.

"I don't care if you read it from beginning to end," said she, carelessly; "but what's the matter?"

"Oh, nothing;—you'll think it nothing, of course—women have their own code of honor. It is not ours, that's all," said Mark.

Agnes made a hurried mental survey of liabilities and blots that might be hit, but felt pretty safe.

"I really don't know what you mean, Mark; I wish you would speak plainly."

He placed his hand on her shoulder, not caressingly, and looked down in her face.

"You remember that evening, when you swore to me that my—my idea about that man—was false?"

"What man?—whom do you mean?"

"You know, very well."

"Roke Wycherly?" she said, and turned away a little contemptuously.

"Well, well, don't look away, look here—at *that!*" He laughed coldly, as he held the note before her eyes for a minute

A brilliant scarlet colored her cheeks as she said it, but she tossed her head a little, and said, looking askance on it—

"Well?"

"Upon my soul, that's cool!" he said, bitterly, and with a very savage eye.

"My foolish little note to Roke Wycherly?" she said. "I see it—well?"

"Well!" he echoed, growing paler; "reconcile that with your oath, if you can."

Agnes had recovered her nerve.

"Reconcile that! I'm not going, if you can't. No harm ever came of that note; don't be a great old fool, Mark Shadwell! I think it's agreed to let by-gones be by-gones. Let us understand one another. What have I gained by marrying you? Simply a share in the solitude and mortifications of an excluded man. I never see a creature here. It would be insulting, but that I know it was so before, and is meant not for me, but for you. As your wife, however, I am simply avoided, as you are, and here I sit under the insult of that neglect and avoidance, merely to be a drudge over your accounts and letters, which you can't understand or write yourself—to try to save you, and to retrieve your ruined property. I don't care if that note were stuck up at Raby post-office, for every squire, and boor, and woman—you have no ladies—in the county to read. I'm sick of this place already, and tired of its secrets, and I should not mind bidding you good-bye any morning, my good sir. Your note, indeed! What a discovery!"

She shut her desk, with a clap, down upon the letter she had half written.

"I shan't show you my letters. I shan't tell you any thing; we know quite enough of one another. If you want to see my letters, I suppose you can break my desk, as usual. I'm afraid of no discovery. I have no atrocious secrets."

And thus speaking, she walked out of the room with an air of defiance, and even menace, in which was no trace of vulgarity; it was perfectly graceful.

Mark Shadwell stared after her, his ears tingling as if he had received a blow; the tremor of fury was in his hand. Upon a vain man, proud, full of the egotism of solitude, an insult, which tears alike his vanity and his dignity, tells with a power of which men in a less morbid state know nothing.

He hardly breathed; he did not even curse—that relief vouchsafed to squires. His lips were closed, and he sighed once or twice, and going to the table, he turned over the leaves of a book of prints slowly, seeing dark pictures of quite another kind all the time.

Then, perhaps for the first time, his heart was wrung with a sudden and great remorse. Poor Amy, that adored him, in spite of the cold decay of his love, through all his dark and unreasonable moods, with an unchanging worship; who had never given him one ungentle look or word. The remembrance came with a vivid pang. He was not a man to confess himself wrong. Even in the solitude of that room he would not have spoken all he felt; but he missed her.

Mark, in his slow and lonely walk, met the messenger returning from Raby with the letters. There was one for him from Captain Clayton. It was not very long. He was coming to Raby to see him. He had been ailing, and his physician hinted that he must winter at Naples.

Not a word about Rachel! Was all that cooling? Mark would soon see. There was no absolute need, however, that he should say any thing upon that subject in his letter, coming as he intended so soon.

The autumnal sun had set, and the sky clouded with faded gold and crimson, piled and floating in seas of faintest yellow and pale green, rose sad and solemn before him, and toned the lightest minds to melancholy thoughts, and others, sad already, with a profounder gloom. Mark was leaning by the window, and looking over the dimly-glowing undulations of sward and woodland toward haunted Wynderfel. Dreams of the dead and lost; of Carmel Sherlock and his crazy visions and inalienable fidelity; of the predestinated decay of his family, and the legend of the angry spirit—the lady of Feltram hollow—with the star of Bethlehem on her left hand—when he felt the fingers of a little hand playfully pluck his ear, and a soft, sweet voice said—

"Come, Mark, we can't afford to quarrel; you remember the two companions in the Eddystone light-house? Don't let us imitate them. I dare say I was very cross, and I beg your pardon" (she made him a little comic, plaintive courtesy). "But it was you who began—Mark, you know it was—and now we'll make it up, and we understand one another ever so much better, and we'll never quarrel again."

He looked at her, with the odd lights of Wynderfel upon her strangely beautiful face. Her words and manner were playful, but her face was hard and even cruel.

"I don't know," said he, surprised by the suddenness of her speech, "in what mood you are talking, but I accept it as in earnest, and I agree. It is too late for me to think of making new friends, Agnes; and if I lose you, I lose my last."

She smiled. The odd, wild lights reflected from the sky distorted that smile. It looked arch and sinister. Her right hand was round his neck, and still in gentle play plucked at his ear. Her left he had taken in both his, and fondled it caressingly; its palm was up, with the little star-like scar, five-rayed, in its centre. She kissed his cheek, and whispered something in his ear, and he smiled in his turn.

So the little quarrel was made up, but each remembered it. It had scarred a deep line in Mark's heart; it had opened in their nuptial chamber, for a moment, a closet where he saw a whip of scorpions hissing on the wall. It had swelled the soft, clear tones of Agnes to a piercing yell of thunder, at sound of which the sky blackened and the earth trembled under his feet.

Was that proud man to live henceforward under a threat?

CHAPTER LXXI.

MARK AT APPLEBURY.

So the apple-leaf grew yellow, and the hawthorn-tree was brown, at Raby. October had arrived, and at no season of the year does that melancholy old place, with its fine forest vistas, and its vast stretch of wooded hill, look so grand.

In this becoming costume did Captain Clayton, on his arrival at his inn in the pretty little town, find the ancient seat of Raby; and if he has been blessed with a sense of the picturesque, one might have supposed that he had made his arrangements — and it would have been well worth his while—so as to make his visit at that sad and glorious crisis in the forest world, when decay and maturity—its glory and death—are blended with a funereal splendor.

Clayton went up at once, and paid his respects at the great house. When Mark returned from the Mills, he found him established in the drawing-room.

"You've promised to come to us, mind, just as you did last time—every day to luncheon, and to stay to dinner," urged Mark, hospitably; and only too happy was Clayton to accept the frank invitation.

He had a good deal to tell about people whom, or, at all events, their fathers or mothers or uncles or aunts, Mark had known long ago; and though his manner of relating was not particularly brilliant, yet the stories were more or less amusing, and afforded him glimpses into a world that had been closed for him forever so many years. But Rachel's name he never once mentioned!

When a silence came, as they sat together by the spluttering wood-fire, Mark sometimes stole a glance at his handsome, apathetic face, as his large azure eyes gazed indolently on the burning logs, and the lingering smile left by his last story still showed the edges of his even teeth. But the long-expected re-introduction of the subject on which he desired to hear him, came not.

"He seems to think all quite at an end, and I can't blame him," said Mark, peevishly.

"I'm certain," answered his wife, cheerily, "that he does not think *we* think so."

"I don't see how that affects the case, except in making us appear excessively absurd."

"So it would, if Captain Clayton were a different sort of person. But he would not wish us to think he has behaved ill; and, you may depend upon it, he will speak to you."

"But I don't say that he's obliged to say any more about it. Why should he?"

"It was a great pity."

"What?" said he.

"Poor Rachel sacrificing herself to vex you," said Agnes, with a shrug. "You're going to Applebury to-day, ain't you?"

"Yes. I can't be here for luncheon; tell Clayton so, when he comes. Rachel's a fool—a greater fool than she thinks, as she will find by and by."

"I don't blame her for hating me," said Mrs. Shadwell, "although I have never been anything but kind to her, according to my poor opportunities. But she ought not to speak of you—her father—as she does."

"Oh! of course, she hates me! Every miss who fancies she is to rule her father's house and himself, by Jove! hates him, as a matter of course, if he marries," said Mark, affecting to think nothing of it.

"Yes, but I don't think the Temples should encourage that kind of thing. Even before servants, she and they talk us over—you particularly."

"Well, I'm going to Applebury now, and I shan't be back till near dinner-time, and I don't care a farthing what they say."

And with this magnanimous speech, looking, nevertheless, very much annoyed, as she could see by every line of his face, he took his departure.

Applebury is a cheerful, quaint little place, as I have said, with an antique coziness and a wonderful variety of aspect within so small a compass. But of all places on earth, except one, Applebury was to Mark Shadwell the most repulsive. What was he to do, however, when people, whom he wanted to see, fixed that spot—the most convenient half-way trysting place—for a meeting?

I shan't trouble any one with the particulars of the business that brought Mark here. It was an anxious one. His attorney from Raby was here to aid him with advice and documents. Mark hated business as much as every rational man, who has nothing to gain by it, does. Besides, in his case, it too generally meant danger. He had sat up late the night before, over it, and had been wakeful and feverish by reason of it, almost till day broke.

It was past six o'clock that evening, when Agnes received a note from him in these terms:

"Applebury, 4 o'clock.

"My own beautiful little Witch:—Pity your poor old fellow, shut up in this vile little town. A telegram says that the people from London won't be here till next train, six o'clock. I can't be home till eight or nine, at soonest; awkward, isn't it? Make my apologies to Clayton. I had no notion such an awkward delay could happen; but I shall break away from my tormentors as early as possible. Already my life darkens—my star of Bethlehem shines too far away. I did not know how much every hour of my life depended on my enchantress. For the world I would not have left you alone; but here I am on compulsion. Looking for light, I remain here; in exile, still the captive of my beautiful witch.

"P.S.—I fear I shan't be home till nine."

This was a sufficiently ardent love-letter from a fellow of Mark Shadwell's years; and what is more, in great measure genuine; which is more than can be said for all such performances. It might not have been quite so long, however, if Mark had not found his young wife a little exacting, as brides are, at least, while they continue to be in love with their husbands! and also there was this, Agnes was a precisian in her ideas of what she owed to prudence. She worried him sometimes with scruples, and compelled him to go to places with her where he thought she might perfectly well have gone alone. These little exactions vexed him sometimes; but, on the whole, it was a fault on the side of the virtues, and pleased him. So he wisely cultivated those nun-like ideas, and laid more stress on his regret for his absence from dinner than he thought the accident quite deserved.

Another disappointment awaited him. By the six o'clock train no one arrived for him; but, half an hour after, another telegram told of an unavoidable delay in London, and the postponement of the meeting until next day.

It was dark now. Across the market-square

of Applebury you could not distinguish any longer windows or doors, except where candle or fire-light shone through them. You could only see the gables against the, as yet, moonless sky, like the shoulders of gigantic sentries. The sounds of the little town had died out; Mark was peevish, hungry, and tired. His attorney had taken his leave, and ridden home to Raby half an hour ago. While the good people of the inn were getting ready a beefsteak for the exhausted squire, he, with his feet on the fender, fell into a nap, troubled, after awhile, by a confused and ugly dream.

He fancied himself in a strange room; how he came there he could not remember; and, with the anticipation of danger which sometimes overpowers one in a dream, he was listening to a heavy tread, approaching on the lobby, and under which the floor on which he stood trembled. While he listened in suspense, from the farther side of the room, on a sudden, the voice of Carmel Sherlock scared him, crying, "Beware, sir! it's the beak." At the same time the door seemed to open, and a huge gaunt figure, with a black crape over his face, and a parchment process in his hand, entered. At his elbow was Sir Roke Wycherly, with a white malignant face, peering by his side, and with a long hand, the fingers of which were grimed with old blood-stains, extended toward Mark—he continued crying, "To-night's your time! you have the warrant, there's your man." The big-boned figure, in the black mask, was close to him, and Mark, in his agony, seized a knife; it was the dagger of Roke Wycherly—an image always present to his eye—which seemed to lie on the table before him. The room and its belongings were growing like the fatal room at Raby. But it seemed to him that his endeavors to defend himself were frustrated by his young wife, who from behind clung wildly about his arms, screaming with a terrifying laugh in his ear, "The knife, Mark, defend yourself! the knife—or he'll have you!" At the same time a dreadful roar of waters was drowning all the voices, and the room seemed to topple and roll like a sinking ship. And with a struggle, like strangulation, he suddenly awoke with a cry of "God!" repeated fearfully.

For awhile he did not know where he was; he had sprung to his feet. The roar and darkness of the sinking room were still in his ears and eyes, and he distinguished nothing.

Even after all this had vanished, the sense of danger remained, and he listened breathlessly, wondering whether those accursed London fellows could have sent down a bailiff after all.

Mark, like other avowed sceptics, had a strong vein of superstition. One way or another, the instinct of belief in the unseen will assert itself. Out to the inn door walked Mark, to shake off the lingering images of his evil dream, and to allow its influence to exhale in the free night air.

An under-current of his thought had been busy for half the day with his own possible arrest, and he still held, crumpled between his finger and thumb, one of those reminders printed on a little square of paper, which good men drop about, on the chance that one seed in a thousand may strike root. He had picked it up on the chimney-piece of the inn room, and in the act of reading the words, so early heard and so accustomed that their very meaning seems, like an aroma too long exposed to the air, to have quite exhaled and spent itself; and we have but a residuum of sound:

"But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up."

So his dream was accounted for; and Mark, somewhat better, returned, at the summons of the waiter, to partake of his good cheer. But as he rode home this dream, in spite of his reason, depressed his spirits with an ever-recurring sense of having witnessed, in reality, something dreadful; and his mind, every now and then, was busy with the fanciful problem—which he affected to despise—did this dream reflect, as it were, some event still approaching?

When he reached the gate of Raby, he was glad. The sombre outlines of the great house, and the towering trees which surrounded it, as a rule, gladdened few people, and him least of all. But he called up the image of the fireside and the lighted drawing-room, and his beautiful wife, no doubt uncomfortable by reason of his protracted stay. "Yes, the pretty little fool, she'll be glad to see me. She don't know what to think; and Clayton—will Clayton be still here?" He rather wished he might. He shouldn't mind a game of *écarté*, or even a homely rubber of backgammon. And as these cheerful fancies crossed his mind, a thought struck him. Should he play them a little trick, and knock at the drawing-room window? So letting his sober horse find his way to the stables as best he might, he dismounted and walked round the side of the house, and on the grass under the windows, at the back, till he reached those of the drawing-room, through the blinds of which he could see the glow transmitted from the inner light.

CHAPTER LXXII.

A STORM.

This drawing-room had three windows; a larger and drearier room beyond it was disused. The window-blind did not quite cover the lower end of the glass, and Mark stood and peeped in. His mood was instantly and sternly changed.

Clayton and his wife were standing beside a cabinet, very near the window. He was talking, holding her hand in his, and she looking down, her cheeks dyed with a brilliant blush.

Could it be that they were talking of Rachel? No. It was the hope and agony of an instant. There is no mistaking the gaze of a lover who looks upon the object of his passion. With such eyes, Clayton, speaking low and earnestly, leaning over her, gazed; and, as if to preclude all doubt, stooping still nearer, he passionately kissed her unresisting lips.

If Mark's fury had been one degree under its acme, he would have dashed in the window, and, with his lacerated hands and ghastly face, have confronted his betrayers. He drew back, staring at the dull light of the blind that now interposed. But the picture was not in the room, but in his eyes. Backward he stepped and waited—and waited still—trying to understand and feel the whole of his appalling position. Freezing and stupefied, he saw the black image

of the great old house stand up before and above him. All its hateful and dreadful associations were vaguely gathered in its shadow. He had dreamed of despair—talked of despair—fancied that he was intimate with despair for years. He had now, for the first time, met that tremendous stranger.

Some one approached the window; he saw the shadow on the blind and he glided away into the dark, like a ghost, and was hid. Clayton raised it and looked out for a few moments, dropped it and returned.

For a long time Mark stood where he was; at last he was seized with a violent shivering. It was a crisis in his catalepsy. A dull dead light was breaking on his mind, and he began to walk swiftly away. It was a mild night, and yet he was pierced and shuddering with cold. Walking among the trees as fast as he could stride, he felt better, and the dreadful rigor subsided.

The one idea present to his mind was his revenge. Immense it must be, orderly and complete. His mind must be clear. He must see, quite, how the land lay. He must do nothing hand-over-head. It must be a comprehensive and methodical revenge. But something he must be doing. To be quite inactive was to go mad.

He was now near the gate that opened on the silent highway, and the sight of the road to the little town of Raby suggested his first measure.

The distance was trifling. He was now in the street of the quiet little town he had so recently trotted briskly through. It was still early, not nine o'clock. Lights were shining from the drawing-room windows of his attorney, Mr. Twinley.

He knocked—sent up his message; and in a few moments more was seated in that gentleman's office. The attorney, as he set the candles on the table, eyed him with a shrewd and grim scrutiny. He suspected some disaster. He feared the bailiff in charge of his person might be, at that moment, keeping ward in the hall; for Mark's face looked as if he had stolen from his bed in the crisis of a fever.

"Nothing from London—since—sir?" hesitated the attorney, seeing that Mark did not accost him. He had left him only two hours ago at Applebury.

"No. You have that draft-deed, in favor of my wife, ready?"

"Yes, sir—and—"

"And engrossed?"

"Engrossed? Yes, sir, but—"

"Put it on the table, please," said Mark.

"Certainly, sir; but will you permit me only one word?"

"Do as I tell you, sir," said Mark, sternly; "we can talk afterward."

"Certainly, sir," said the attorney, a little high and huffed; and, getting on a chair, he took down from shelves well stored with others like it, a mahogany-colored tin-box, with "M. Shadwell, Esq., Raby," in large yellow letters on the front; and drawing forth the deed, placed it before Mark, who opened the milk-white parchment folds, and displayed that handsome piece of engrossing with its blue stamps and silver foil, ready at the touch of his pen to become fixed and inflexible as those chemical fluids which solidify at the turning of a stopper.

"You can get a couple of witnesses—"

"Well, I—" The attorney looked at his watch.

"Oh! yes," interrupted Mark, fiercely. "Of course you can—and—I'm not going to sign this thing;" and he pushed the deed with the back of his hand a little from him. "I've changed my mind, and I want you to draw the shortest will you can, leaving every thing I possess, without exception, to my daughter. I've made up my mind to-night, and she shall have it rather than a—a stranger."

By this time Mark's mind was clear, and his hand steady, and he wrote across the deed without a tremor these words to which the date was prefixed: "Having changed my mind this evening, I do not intend to execute this deed, and have countermanded my instructions, with the intention of dealing differently with my property in my will. M. SHADWELL."

Beneath them, at Shadwell's request, the wondering and curious attorney wrote: "Present while Mr. Shadwell wrote and signed the above memorandum;" and at foot of this, the attorney himself signed his name.

Mark Shadwell walked up and down the room, sometimes stopping to look out of the window with the same unchanged and stony face, while the attorney copied a short form of a will, which Shadwell read, and perfected then and there, and, taking it and the deed with him, departed, leaving the attorney at the door-steps, with his candle blown out in his courteous hand, bursting with wonder and surmise as he watched Mark's tall, slight figure receding homeward.

But Mark did not go home. A fitful, melancholy wind had got up, and the moon was just showing its edges above the distant mountains and lighting the filmy streak of cloud that lay over them, as he entered the gate of Raby, and passing the great dark house, which no longer showed a gleam, but seemed to have closed its eyes, thinking of its secrets, he took the path to Wynderfel.

A man who walks with one idea in his head, and in a high state of excitement, gets over the ground quickly. The moon was now up, and a mournful wind piped through the roofless gables and open windows of the old Manor House of Wynderfel, under whose walls he already was. From the lady's window an arm seemed wildly to wave him toward it. It was only that long ivy tendril, white in the moonlight, which had got a trick of beckoning when the wind was up.

He passed by these haunted walls, and down the lonely path to the vicarage—a solitary figure in that region deserted of life. Below him lay that happier land without the circle of Wynderfel, where were farmsteads and hedge-rows, and the snug and kindly vicarage, from which he could dimly see a lonely light.

The servant who opened the vicarage door did not happen to know Mark Shadwell. So much the better for him. The cheery sounds of voices and laughter came through the little drawing-room door as the maid opened it to say that a gentleman, who would not give his name, was in the hall, and wanted to say a word to the vicar on particular business. The vicar's "Show him into the study" followed instantly, and the vicar himself, with the pleasant radiance of the

beloved faces he had just left still on his own thin features, entered, and looked with an uncertain gaze upon the figure, buttoned up in a loose coat, and imperfectly lighted.

"It is I—*Shadwell*," said Mark, in a low tone, as the vicar shut the door. "Just a word or two."

"Oh!" explained the vicar, "I'm so glad. Won't you come into the drawing-room? Do."

"Two documents that I want to leave with you," continued Mark, whose speech went right on, like the chimes of a clock, "an odd hour; but I happened to be near this. You'll take care of them—great care, I know; this is the deed I was thinking of executing; but that's past. You'll see what I have written across the face of it; and this is my will. You can read them—time enough when I've left you. You take an interest in Rachel. You'll be glad when you see what I have done; and—I thank you, Temple, for your kindness to her, and you'd have been a good friend to me if I had allowed you. I must go."

"But it's a very nasty night. Did you drive?"

"I walked. Good-bye."

"You must take my cob; it's no night for a walk over those uplands."

Mark had reached the hall door, and without waiting opened it. The wind was not on the front of the house, but it had increased to something like the gusty beginnings of a gale. The vicar held the door open, and the glass bell in the hall, with its modest candle, swung in the unruly air that it admitted, and threw its flaring light on Mark's pale face as, with the strangest smile the vicar ever saw, he nodded his farewell over his shoulder, while his loose coat flapped about him, and waving back his hand as if to forbid ceremony, he strode away.

The vicar shut his door with some little exertion, and locked it and drew the bolts, and having indorsed in pencil the date at which Shadwell had placed the documents in his hands, he locked them up also, intending, by and by, to read them as Mark seemed to wish. And he crossed the hall, anticipating the attack which the curious women were sure to make, and thinking how best to fence pleasantly with his intending examiners.

The wind gradually increased in violence. It became a storm. Even in the sheltered vicarage its fury was heard, on high, loud and awful, and Miss Barbara was up twice in the night in her dressing-gown and slippers patroling the lobbies, and with great disgust and terror wondering at the apathy of the other human occupants of the house.

At midnight Mark had not returned to Raby. Agnes did not know what to think. His horse, without a rider, had found his way to his stable door. In such sinister conjunctures of doubt and alarm, what a magic mirror does the imagination hold up! Happy those who, in a spirit of prayer, can lift the veil and look in. She could not look with pure eyes, and in its depths saw only phantoms that appalled her.

At half-past twelve she sent down a frightened note to the attorney, who, she knew, had accompanied him to Applebury. Mr. Twinley scrawled a line in pencil from his bed to say he had seen him at nine o'clock, when he called, after his return from Applebury, for a few minutes, and here the note stopped.

What had he called about? Whither had he gone? Had bad news come from London? Was he a prisoner? Was he forced to fly? Or—or—and she dropped the veil over the spectres that were astir upon the speculum.

Mr. Twinley had turned upon his other side, and was deep in the peaceful sleep of a robust attorney, when he was again awakened by an energetic note from the lady of Raby. It called on him to come up to Raby and see her, otherwise she would come down to his office and see him.

Mr. Twinley might admire the new Mrs. Shadwell, but he did not like her. If he had been sure that the squire would stick to his resolution of the evening before, he would have taken this message very coolly. But human passion is transitory—*amantium iræ* proverbially so, and wills are revocable. The queen might enjoy her own again, and the Raby connection was worth preserving.

So, though rather peevishly, the attorney did get up, and dress in haste, and walked down to Raby, where the lady received him awfully pale, and thoughtful, and inquisitive. He wisely kept the subject of his conference with Mark that evening strictly to himself, and wondered intensely what the secret could be. It plainly was not a quarrel. Mark had spoken to him in the morning about the deed, and had not seen his wife since.

"He must have heard news, however," said the pale lady with decision, "or he is consulting with Mr. Temple at the vicarage, and they don't know how late it is. He'll turn up immediately, or they have made him stay there, it is such an awful night."

"Yes, indeed—a frightful night it is, ma'am," said the attorney, with feeling.

"Won't you take a glass of sherry, Mr. Twinley?" said the lady, thoughtfully.

"No, thank you, ma'am."

"You think he'll be here soon?" urged the eager wife, holding the candle at the dining-room door, as the attorney entered the hall where the servant waited to let him out.

"Oh! yes, ma'am, I'm sure you're right about his waiting at the vicarage. Slates were flying, I assure you, in the street of Raby as I came, and I should not be surprised if some of the trees here were blown down before morning."

And the attorney's countenance darkened as, with this idea in his mind, he thought of his walk under the huge trees that line the avenue.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

A KNOCKING AT THE DOOR.

Not that night did Mark Shadwell return to Raby. Various were the moods that lightened or darkened the soul of Agnes Shadwell through these long hours as the flying scud above the wild and agitated landscape. Where was Mark? What had become of him? What was he meditating?

From the summit of the sylvan uplands that overlooked Wynderfel there opens, gradually, descending toward that ruined mansion, a ravine

which expands into a dark glen. This glen at one spot widens into an amphitheatre, walled darkly up at its southern side by a precipice, over whose stained front brambles hang and thick ivy grows; and over its upper edge the old trees stoop and gather, deepening the solemn shadow which makes the tarn that washes its base look black as ink. The tiny stream that feeds this sombre lake steals out from the rocks at its foot, and makes its way deviously through the glen, which narrows again at the other end of the tarn, leaving, however, a level carpet of grass.

Of all that lonely region this is the most entirely lonely spot. The overshadowed tarn looks smooth as ice, and black as ink, and there are fabulous stories of its depth at some points. On the green floor of soft sward that lies on the eastern side of the sheet of water stands the kyst-shaped black tomb of the suicide, Lady Mildred of Wynderfel. There is inscription neither of name nor of date. In rude bas-relief reposes a female figure, life-size, with the left hand raised above the shoulder, and in the centre of the palm a five-rayed star, such as heralds term a star of Bethlehem.

In this solitude of solitudes repose the outcast bones of the suicide. If she pined for quiet and oblivion, never did mortal drink deeper of both. From a silence like the grave, from an abyss into whose depth scarcely at highest summer noon does the sun ever peep, at night you may look up, through masses of wild trees and clambering under-wood, to the glimmering face and moon-lighted peaks of the precipice, and see the narrow disk of dark-blue sky and stars that roof in this solemn hall of silence. Over it the scud was flying and the storm roaring, and now and then a huge gust broke in, whirling the withered leaves and tossing the boughs frantically in the dark, and lashing the deep pool into sudden eddies.

Toward morning the gale subsided; a sullen calm succeeded, and the leaves that had danced in such mad circles, whirling up in columns nearly to the summit of the precipitous glen, now slept without a stir on the soft grass by the tomb of lonely Mildred, and by the margin of the tarn that looked up to the cold morning sky with a surface as dead and black as if it had never been agitated. A broken bough, floating with its sear leaves upward, alone gave token of the recent fury of the storm. Over it broke the cold wild dawn; the pale sun glittered across the landscape as it might over a field of battle; many a tall tree lay low, and great drifts of yellow leaves were huddled together in clefts and hollows, to dance on forest boughs, in air and sun, no more.

No tidings meanwhile at Raby were heard of Mark Shadwell.

Again the attorney was called up to see the perplexed lady at Raby. This time she sent the tax-cart for him, and he came in better temper. He had asked the servant, and already learned that Mark had not been heard of. She had sent to inquire at the vicarage. He had left that last night at about ten o'clock, as the vicar supposed at the time, intending to return direct to Raby. But he could not say what direction he took.

There was an agent at Chester, with whom Mark often had business. He must be telegraphed to. It would not do to publish far and wide, however, that Mr. Shadwell of Raby had absconded without apprising his wife of his intention. The message therefore said: "If Mr. Shadwell should call, telegraph instantly to me, as a message awaits him here."

In the same terms messages were sent to the hotel at which, in his unfrequent visits to London, he was accustomed to put up; and also to the office of his London attorney.

Two hours passed—three hours—four hours—and brought no answer. At about twelve o'clock Captain Clayton arrived, as usual, having heard nothing of the alarm and perplexity that prevailed at Raby. He came straight into the drawing-room, where Agnes was talking to the attorney, and was struck by a certain pallor in her face, and by the intense coldness of her smile, and her manner to him as she greeted him.

The attorney, as he entered, was taking his leave, and Mrs. Shadwell, who stood on no forms that day, accompanied him into the hall to say a last word.

"That is Mr. Clayton, you know" (she preferred saying Mr. to calling him Captain), "my husband's particular friend—can we make any use of him? May I ask him to call on you just now? perhaps you can devise some employment for him: he would be horridly in the way here, you know."

And having seen him out of the house, she returned to the drawing-room, and, without waiting for question, she placed her hands on his shoulders, looking with her deep eyes into his handsome but apathetic face, at that moment full of stolid wonder, and said—

"Oh! Alfred!—he's gone. I have never seen Mark since: what can it be?"

And though she spoke interrogatively, her eyes suggested dreadful, positive suspicions.

"I—I assure you, I haven't heard from him; if you are apprehensive of any thing of that kind. I haven't, darling, really—upon my honor!" he answered, in great bewilderment.

"You remember when I made you look out of the window last night and you said you saw nothing?"

"Well—I swear there was nothing; I think so. In fact, I'm nearly certain," he hesitated.

"It must have been just about that time his horse came home. They found it in the yard, at the stable door. I—I don't know what to think: he's probably with his London lawyers by this time. Alfred—Alfred! My God! Alfred, what has your madness involved me in!"

"No—now, my darling, you're talking the most arrant nonsense, I do assure you; now just you be quiet; you must not talk so, for fifty reasons. I'll just consider it a little: I'll think what's best to be done, and come back and talk it over with you. Isn't that the best way?"

And so he went; but he did not come back any more than Mark Shadwell. She drove down in her miniature brougham—an acquisition on which she had insisted some months before—to the attorney's office. Captain Clayton had been there. He had run up to London to make inquiries, and having scarcely time to catch the train, had requested the attorney to inform Mrs. Shadwell that he would exert himself to the

uttermost to make the inquiry effectual, and let her know the result forthwith. Mrs. Shadwell concealed her anger.

Next evening's post, however, brought a letter from Clayton to the attorney, which said: "I was on the point of sending the enclosed note direct to Mrs. Shadwell, but reflected that if the uncertainty still continues, her agitation may have increased since yesterday, and knowing the very confidential position occupied by you in Mr. Shadwell's family, I thought I had better leave the note open, that you might use your discretion as to the best manner of apprising Mrs. Shadwell of its purport."

The open note enclosed in this, said—

"My dear Mrs. Shadwell:—I have ventured to make inquiry at all the places usually frequented by Mr. Shadwell in town, and have failed to learn any thing. When his solicitors last heard from him, he had no intention of coming to town. Deeply regretting that I have not been fortunate enough to learn any thing positive, I can only add, that any thing that may strike you or Mr. Twinley as being in my power to aid farther in this anxious affair, I shall be only too happy to undertake. Believe me, my dear Mrs. Shadwell, yours very truly,

"A. L. Clayton."

This cavalier treatment incensed Mrs. Shadwell, and one of her intense, sarcastic notes replied. But it did not reach him till next spring, for Captain Clayton had gone abroad; and it lay upon the hall-porter's table, with a row of similarly neglected letters, of all shapes and sizes, that awaited there the return of their careless owners.

Another idea now visited the anxious brain of Mrs. Shadwell. Could Mark have made away with himself? No; Mark was not mad. There was no aptitude for inflicting on himself any avoidable pain or privation. He was vindictive; he was violent; he was, from long isolation, careless what people might say or think. Heaven alone knew what he might be about.

She went down to Raby and saw Twinley, and cross-questioned him about the deed, and, on hearing that her husband had taken away the engrossed copy, as yet unexecuted—Twinley took care to tell no more about that than he was strictly obliged—she demanded the draft-deed, which, taking her receipt for it, he gave her.

Mrs. Shadwell was suffering. She did not know what to think. Ominous as every thing looked, it was still possible that Mark was merely complying with a necessity, and concealing himself till some special danger—which he had no time to communicate to others—had blown over.

Miss Barbara came over to see her, and found her rather silent, fierce and odd; but looking miserably. She told her brother, Stour, that if he had seen her he could not help pitying her. To which he replied, that "Suspense is torture, and of course she is suffering; but I confess I pity our poor Rachel a great deal more, because there can be no doubt that her misery is unselfish."

I don't know what was passing in honest Roger's mind during the period of Mark Shadwell's disappearance. He originated no conjectures, but listened earnestly to those of others. His spirits recovered, not their gayety—that would not have been decent—but their energy, and his attention to his toilet mysteriously revived. He was sorry on Rachel's account. He was shocked even. Mark might be in France, or in the Fleet—who could tell where? But he might also have killed himself, or been killed; and, in that case, might it not be reserved for honest Roger to comfort his widow? He had heard of the course of true love, diverted similarly from its proper channel, and returning thus circuitously to reward patient fidelity, after an interval of despair. He knew, as many men do, cases precisely in point. The nature of his suspense, therefore, was somewhat affected by these secret considerations.

Four days had now passed and brought no tidings of Mark Shadwell.

The night had closed: serene moonlight silvered the wooded landscape. The air was still and frosty. It was a night of utter silence, and now twelve o'clock. Agnes could not sleep: nervously listening, she lay, still with her dress on, awake upon her bed, the coverlet thrown over her. Her maid was sleeping in the same room: Agnes could not bear to be alone.

Leaning on her elbow, she had been for a minute listening, and fancying a distant sound. But she had listened in vain, and placed her sleepless head again upon the pillow, and fell into dismal speculations and reveries, that frightened her; and, in the midst of these silent communings, a loud and long double knock suddenly thundered at the hall door, and the bell rang shrilly.

"Dorothy! Dorothy!" shrieked Agnes, starting upright in the bed. "My God! It's your master's knock!"

CHAPTER LXXIV.

CONCLUSION.

"Get your things on as fast as you can—any way, no matter—you can throw a cloak over you."

And as the half-awakened maid obeyed, Agnes hurried to the window; but she had forgotten that it did not command a view of the hall door. Before the shutters were well opened, the knocking and ringing were repeated.

"Quick, Dorothy! I can't go without you—do, for Heaven's sake!"

Expecting to see Mark in a few moments—not knowing what story he might have to tell, or in what spirit or character he might appear—her heart, which all this while was beating as if it would choke her, suddenly, with a deadly faintness, felt as if it stopped still. But Agnes was not a lady to swoon easily. There is some truth in the theory of effort. When she and her maid had reached the head of the great staircase, a servant had already opened the hall door, and she heard a voice; it was not her husband's, talking in the hall with the old butler, who was still retained.

Agnes descended, stopping now and then for a moment, to listen. When she came into the hall, the old servant, in slippers, and without a neck-tie, in *déshabille*, with a solitary candle on

the table, was talking to a stranger who had not removed his hat. They were talking earnestly, it seemed, and in tones little above a whisper.

Disappointed, and also relieved, she came forward more boldly, and the men looked around. The stranger removed his hat, and advanced to meet her. He was the vicar. Strange was the countenance of Agnes—the light of her candle so close to her face, and that face so pale and contracted with the peculiar frown of pain.

"Tell me quickly; you need not fear," she said, very low, in a voice thin and cold, that thrilled Stour Temple.

She read instantly the dark look in the vicar's earnest eyes—she knew there was news of Mark, bad news for her, at least, she saw it must be.

"Yes—I've learned something about Mr. Shadwell—there has been an accident—a very bad one—fatal—I'm grieved to say."

He was led on to say this by the gaze that was fixed on him. He felt that the least delay would not soften but protract her agony.

She made an attempt to speak, it was but a contortion, her voice did not come; but she was pulling at his hand quiveringly, and he knew she wanted to hear the whole story, be it what it might, and he told it.

I will not relate it in his words, but these were the facts.

Two cows of the vicar's were pastured in Wynderfel park. One of these that evening had strayed away, and a man was sent in quest of it, but in vain.

About eight o'clock, favored by the moonlight, he resumed his search. Having failed in other quarters, he meant to try the woods near Hazelden, which are approached through a glen. He missed his way, however, and found himself, on a sudden, by the awful tarn of Feltram.

The moon being high, lighted the opposite side of the precipitous amphitheatre, and those peaked, grey rocks, projecting through the trees here and there, to which Doré, drawing such a scene, would have given the outlines of shected grotesques, with upraised arms, stooping from midair over the black oval of the pool.

The man looked round, and saw the black tomb of the unhappy Mildred—like a patch of shadow on the grass, and "winter's tales" which he had heard of the "gaze-lady" which, as I have said, local antiquaries tell us is truly "ghaist-ladye," came crowding horribly on his memory; and these scaring fancies were brought suddenly to their climax by his seeing, just emerging above the smooth surface of the tarn, a human figure, floating face upward.

It was not till he looked hard at it for some seconds that he became certain that the white object which he saw was a half-submerged human face, looking upward against that streak of moonlight which, wavering and flickering in the shadow of nearly leafless branches, yet so sharply defined it, that there could remain no doubt in his mind—except that the appearance might be one of the delusions practiced by the goblin of that haunted glen.

Forgetting the cow, and every thing but the ghost of the Lady Mildred, the man got away as fast as he could, and by the time he got quite out of that haunted territory, he began to reflect that the figure he had seen floating in the tarn might have been not a ghost, but a corpse. He made haste to the vicarage, and there saw Stour Temple, who, though it was by this time past ten, got men together, and with his brother Roger, and proper appliances for drawing the body, if such it should prove to be, from the water and carrying it away, set off for the glen of Feltram.

The vicar was very silent during the march. He had a presentiment—so had others—which no one uttered. Through the narrow glen, bearing their ropes and poles for an extemporized bier, silent and awed, like men passing into a cathedral at a midnight funeral, they entered that dark hall where stands the solitary tomb, and the tarn reflects the stars.

Taking their stand upon that patch of sward on which fell a narrow strip of light from the moon, now high in the heavens, they got the rope in a long loop round the object which floated at the surface, and drew it slowly to the margin.

Slowly, with a sort of undulation, sometimes under, sometimes over the water, it glided to the bank. With hardly a word, spoken under breath, they drew it up, with a trail of water streaming after, and laid it, a few yards on, in the patch of moonshine. It was the tall, slender figure, and proud face of Mark Shadwell, on which the moonlight fell!

The vicar looked down upon the familiar features of the man with whom so much of the past of his secluded existence was associated, with a vague mingling of deep emotion and deep thought. Every face is sublime in death. The whole case is there; the weakness and the fate. It awes and it softens us. We see, for the first time, how much was excusable, how tremendous is the penalty. The tale is told, to which words can be added never more, and it lingers still in our ears. We remember things we might have said, but which can never now be said. The writing is finished, and rolled up, and sealed, till the tremendous day breaks over all.

Having given his men orders to convey the body to Raby, and left that matter in charge of his brother, he himself walked on to Raby, whose immates were startled, as I have said, by his late knocking.

"Very rash," thought the vicar, struggling to get rid of a conviction that haunted him, as he rapidly trod the Wynderfel path to Raby, "very mad of him to take that devious and dangerous way on such a night!"

The truth is, there was no way of accounting reasonably for Mark Shadwell's having taken the Feltram path, if his object was to reach Raby either safely, in such a storm, or expeditiously. Stour Temple was trying to exclude the hypothesis, at which other people arrived, unanimously—I mean, that the squire's death was not accidental. Knowing all I do of the circumstances, and of that impulsive, violent, and hypochondriac man, as well as of the intense agitation in which he took his leave of the vicar that night, and of the legal measures he had taken to secure the disposition of his property, I have myself no doubt whatever, that Mark Shadwell made away with himself, in his despair, deliberately.

In the mind of every man who willfully ends his life, there are, I have no doubt, fluctuations, waverings, horrible recoils, and then relapses into suicidal frenzy, before the irrevocable plunge, or pistol-shot, or razor-gash. Human

nature takes fright, and cries, No! with all its might; and morality pleads, and the whole man shudders and protests; and he thinks, and thanks God—the danger is over; but the mysterious temptation recurs—importunes, bewitches, transforms him—and he is gone!

The body lay that night at Raby. A coroner's jury pronounced his death accidental, following strictly such evidence as was before them, though every man of them had his misgivings, and afterward his convictions.

Time has passed—with many disturbances and adjustments, demolishing and repairing, obliterating and creating, and carrying on the great story of human passion, vanity, and sorrow, since then.

The beautiful Agnes—like a spirit in possession—was not easily to be cast out. She was active, truculent, unscrupulous; and seemed resolved to contest the rights of the heiress of Raby to the last. But Rachel had no intention of turning one who had been her father's wife—undeserving as she was—adrift upon the world with absolutely no provision. She knew nothing of that paroxysm of jealousy, and its cause, which had produced the catastrophe.

Perhaps Mark Shadwell's construction of what he saw was too nearly absolute and extreme, considering how strangely perfidious that woman was, and how capable of deception within deception, and of merely beguiling Clayton and befooling him for a purpose.

Clayton, however, kept her at arm's-length ever after, and she hated him with a mysterious and intense acrimony.

So soon as the fury of this beautiful young woman, holding Raby against the siege of London attorneys, engineered by counsel learned in the law, a little cooled, and her cold, shrewd common sense asserted itself, she was more disposed to listen to reason, and so a treaty was concluded. Rachel charged the estate with an annuity to her, and she covenanted to trouble her and the estate no more. So this evil angel, so beautiful and fatal, her mission ended, vanished, and ceased to be seen and heard at Raby.

I have heard of her at different places—at Paris, at Florence, at Spa, at Vienna, at St. Petersburg, where occurred that fracas which I dare say you remember.

This ambiguous beauty is clever and admired, and carries with her a gentle gayety, an angry heart, and many secrets. I am always expecting to hear more of her. Scarlet lip and pearly smile, and softest eddies of dimples; those brilliant blushes, and dark eyes, with liquid glances, shy and fiery, are still weaving spells, and turning heads, and setting new dramas in motion.

And so she is going up and down, and to and fro upon the earth. There are disappointments and revenges; deep works the "little billow" of that bosom. The fire is not quenched, and she is not happy.

Rachel is married, very happily, to Mr. Charles Mordant, of whom I know little, except that he is a very good fellow. Old Mervyn, his uncle, stopped the suit he had commenced, and the estate has benefited by that forbearance; but he paid off, besides, a smart mortgage. He has the young people to live with him at free quarters, and takes an interest in nursing the Raby estate, which is already emerging. Rachel will never live at Raby: it has too many melancholy and terrible associations.

One secret of that ill-omened house is, happily for her, hid alike from herself and the world. It concerns the murder of Sir Roke Wycherly, which happened thus.

Sir Roke, after a short nap in his chair, awoke. He got up and locked his door, which opened upon the lobby. The other door, which communicated with Clewson's room, being bolted, you would have said that the baronet was tolerably secure. There was a fatality here, however. Just as he had completed the mysterious ceremony of unwigging, described at the inquest by Mr. Clewson, and donned that quaint cap in which he was found next morning dead in his chair, he heard a step approaching from the end of the gallery. The baronet had been expecting a note from Miss Marlyn all the evening. It was awkward, his night-cap being on his head instead of that extremely clever wig in which he usually met his friends. Still, he could not risk missing that note. It struck him, however, that the step might be that of Carmel Sherlock, whose crazy visit at his door he remembered uncomfortably; and rather to quiet a nervous feeling, than with the slightest idea that it might actually be employed, he took up the dagger which, in an evil hour for him, he saw shining upon the dressing-table, and then went quickly to his door and peeped out upon the gallery.

The step was not that of Carmel Sherlock, nor yet that which he half expected. It was the figure of Mark Shadwell, now very near his door, that appeared. He had intended passing on to his own room, but Roke Wycherly stopped him, and invited him in, with what to Mark seemed an irritating insincerity—satirical, inquisitive—which he felt like an insult.

In a spirit of latent defiance, then, Mark did turn into the room. Those who mean to tease others, and amuse themselves with their irritations, should be very sure of their own tempers. Roke Wycherly being, in some respects, a man of the world, though naturally, as Mr. Clewson knew, a gentleman easily exasperated, could affect good humor where it suited him. But under the strain of circumstances, all affectations are liable to break down.

The cards were there, but Shadwell did not care to play, and the baronet talked a little in his usual ironical vein. There are rules to be observed, of course, in this kind of game, as in others, and I have no doubt that had Mark respected them, Sir Roke would have managed to keep his temper. But Mark Shadwell's natural violence and isolated habits were against all such regulated hostilities. He became utterly unparliamentary, and was quickly very much the more provoking of the two, and broke into insult so direct and galling, that the baronet, with a pallid smile, told him he lied, and at the same moment chucked the pen that lay on the table in his face.

The wizened malevolent smile, the retorted outrage, Mark's long-pent hate and ungovernable pride and violence, transported him.

As a man starts from his bed in the crisis of a frightful dream, in a moment, Mark stood freezing before his victim. The convulsive smile

continued, there was something like a sob, and another, and a gush of blood flowed from the simpering mouth. Mark's hands wildly pressed the wound, and the blood flowed warm and sluggishly through his fingers and over his wrists, and the changeless face of Roke Wycherly seemed to smile at efforts vain as the dream of rolling back time and undoing the past; and Mark felt, with a transport like madness, that the work of that blind moment was for him and for Roke to go on, and on and on—through inexorable eternity.

It was the few furious words of the altercation and the crash of the decanter, overturned by Mark's arm, that had startled Mr. Clewson from his slumbers. Then followed the quiet, and those mutterings of Mark's solitary horror, which had deceived him.

As Mark left the room, pale as a spectre, with the dreadful evidences of bloodshed on his hands, he was observed by Agnes Marlyn, herself unseen. When he had gone, her curiosity drew her to Sir Roke's door. It lay partly open. She listened—she knocked, to ascertain whether any one was in the room, and, finally, she entered. She thought something bad must have happened, but had no idea how bad. Courage was the attribute, perhaps, most remarkably pronounced in the strange character of that young girl. But the horrible revelation nearly overcame her. Even in that sickening moment her habit of never acting except on second thoughts, prevailed. Rapidly recovering herself, she distinctly saw the whole truth and comprehended the value of her secret, and stole silently, her brain teeming with horror, wonder, and castles in the air, to her room.

The confession of Carmel Sherlock explains the rest.

I linger over these scenes. When business or pleasure calls me northward, I sometimes make a halt at the quaint little town of Raby, and saunter through the grand old park of the bygone Shadwells, admiring with a renewed interest its picturesque nooks and hollows, its magnificent timber, its sombre uplands, and broad westward slopes.

My latest visit was made toward the end of last October. I looked in upon my dear old friends at the vicarage. They are all well, and by a happy chance I found the vicar himself at home.

One bit of news in that part of the world I learned. An heir has been born to the Mordants, and, I suppose, Rachel is now as happy as mortal well can be. I should have walked over to pay my respects to the young gentleman, had time sufficed. But, alas! the Railway, though an educator, is also a tyrant, and makes us count our minutes and keep tryst, under very disagreeable penalties. So, consulting my watch, I took my leave of those loved and simple friends.

The vicar accompanied me in my walk toward the town of Raby, where he had a call to make. We pursued the well-known path by Wynderfel. And when we reached the ruins, with mutual consent we paused before the silent door-way through which Carmel Sherlock had emerged on the day when he was captured.

"You have read the old Latin inscription cut in the stone of that door-way. It refers, evidently, to the gaze-lady," said the vicar. "The more I think of that legend, the more curious it appears. I have, in my few leisure hours, been collecting materials. I shall find out something of the history of the two ladies who were supposed to have represented, in other centuries, that fatal spirit. Certainly, according to the old prophecy, she was due, as we say of ships, just at the time when Miss Marlyn appeared at Raby, and then, you know, it was to be for the disastrous extinction of the old family name; and see what accompanied it—I may say, what was brought about by it—a great scandal—murder, suicide, and the predicted utter obliteration of the ancient name of Shadwell; and she had the mark of a star in her left hand, also—it tempts one to superstition." The vicar smiled sadly. "And I hear, at intervals, of the wanderings of that mysterious young lady with a kind of interest—though I never liked her—and I should not wonder any day to learn that her clothes were found standing upright and empty, in her room, the form, that had filled them, vanished, like the lady in the German legend, you recollect, who had returned to her husband from the grave. But the sun is near the edge of the distant wood, and I've been delaying you, so let us be gone."

So we turned toward Raby, and for a time, in silence, pursued our way thinking, and then talked of the neighbors, and their haps and mishaps, and sayings and doings, till the moment came for a kind farewell.

Raby is untenanted. But its wild and noble scenery, the picturesque ruins of Wynderfel, and the awful glen of Feltram, draw many a tourist and wandering artist to visit its haunted grounds. These memorials of a once famous race remain, but Shadwell of Wynderfel, or of Raby, a title which we meet with often in old county chronicles, and which mingles historically with others in the lists of splendor and of war, will turn up no more. It is "A Lost Name."

THE END.

THE TENANTS OF MALORY.

A Novel.

BY J. SHERIDAN LE FANU,

AUTHOR OF "UNCLE SILAS," "GUY DEVERELL," "ALL IN THE DARK,"
&c., &c., &c.

NEW YORK:
HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,
FRANKLIN SQUARE.
1867.

THE TENANTS OF MALORY.

CHAPTER I.

CONCERNING TWO LADIES WHO SAT IN THE MALORY PEW.

THERE were tenants at last in Malory; and the curiosity of the honest residents of Cardyllian, the small and antique town close by, was at once piqued and mortified by the unaccountable reserve of these people.

For four years, except from one twisted chimney in the far corner of the old house, no smoke had risen from its flues. Tufts of grass had grown up between the paving-stones of the silent stable-yard, grass had crept over the dark avenue, which, making a curve near the gate, is soon lost among the sombre trees that throw a perpetual shadow upon it; the groves of nettles had spread and thickened among their trunks; and in the signs of neglect and decay, the monastic old place grew more than ever triste.

The pretty little Welsh town of Cardyllian stands near the shingle of a broad estuary, beyond which tower the noble Cambrian mountains, high and dim, tier above tier; undulating hills, broken by misty glens, and clothed with woods, rise from the opposite shore, and are backed, range behind range, by the dim outlines of Alpine peaks and slopes, and flanked by purple and gold-tinted headlands, rising dome-like from the sea.

Between the town and the gray shingle stretches a strip of bright greensward, the Green of Cardyllian, along which rows of pleasant houses, with little gardens in front, look over the sea to the mountains.

It is a town quaint, old, and quiet. Many of the houses bear date anterior to the great civil wars of England, and on the oak beams of some are carved years of grace during which Shakspeare was still living among his friends, in Stratford-on-Avon.

At the end of long Castle Street rise the battlements and roofless towers of that grand old feudal fortress which helped to hold the conquest of Wales for the English crown in the days of tabards, lances, and the long bow. Its other chief street strikes off at right angles, and up hill from this, taking its name from the ancient church, which, with its church-yard, stands divided from it by a low wall of red sandstone, surmounted by one of those tall and fanciful iron rails, the knack of designing which seems to be a lost art in these countries.

There are other smaller streets and by-lanes, some dark with a monastic stillness, others thinly built, with little gardens and old plum and pear trees peeping over grass-grown walls, and here and there you light upon a fragment of that ancient town wall from which, in the great troubles which have helped to build up the glory of England, plumed cavaliers once parleyed with steel-capped Puritans. Thus the tints and shadows of a great history rest faintly even upon this out-of-the-way and serene little town.

The permanent residents of Cardyllian for half the year are idle, and for mere occupation are led to inquire into and report one another's sins, vanities, and mishaps. Necessity thus educates them in that mutual interest in one another's affairs, and that taste for narrative, which pusillanimous people call prying and tattle. That the people now residing in Malory, scarcely a mile away, should have so totally defeated them, was painful and even irritating.

It was next to impossible to take a walk near Cardyllian without seeing Malory; and thus their failure perpetually stared them in the face.

You can best see Malory from the high grounds which, westward of the town, overlook the estuary. About a mile away you descry a dark and rather wide-spread mass of wood, lying in a gentle hollow, which, I think, deepens its sombre tint. It approaches closely to the long ripple of the sea; and through the foliage are visible some old chimneys and glimpses of gray gables. The refectory of the friary that once stood there, built of gray and reddish stones, half hid in ivy, now does duty as a barn. It is so embowered in trees, that you can scarcely, here and there, gain a peep from without at its tinted walls; and the whole place is overhung by a sadness and seclusion that well accord with its cloistered traditions. That is Malory.

It was Sunday now. Over the graves and tombstones of those who will hear its sweet music no more, the bell had summoned the townsfolk and visitors to the old church of Cardyllian.

The town boasts, indeed, a beautiful old church, Gothic, with side aisles, and an antique stained window, from which gloried saints and martyrs look down, in robes as rich and brilliant

as we see now-a-days only upon the kings and queens of our court cards. It has also some fine old monuments of the Verney family. The light is solemn and subdued, There is a very sweet-toned organ, which they say is as old as the reign of Charles I., but I do not know how truly. In the porch are hung in chains two sacrilegious round-shot, which entered the church when Cromwell's general opened his fire, in those days of sorrow when the liberties of England were in the throes of birth. Beside the brilliant stained window, engraved upon a brass plate is a record of the same "solemn times," relating how certain careful men, to whom we are obliged, had taken down, enclosed in boxes, and buried, in hope of a typical resurrection, the ancient window which had for so long beautified "this church," and thus saved it from the hands of "violent and fanatical men."

When "the season" is still flourishing at Cardyllian, the church is sometimes very full. On the Sunday I speak of it was so. One pew, indeed, was quite relieved from the general pressure. It was the large paneled enclosure which stands near the communion rails, at the right as you look up the aisle toward the glowing window. Its flooring is raised a full foot higher than the surrounding level. This is the seat of the Verney family.

But one person performed his devotions in it, upon the day of which I speak. This was a tall, elegantly slight young man, with the indescribable air of careless fashion; and I am afraid he was much more peeped at and watched than he ought to have been by good Christians during divine service.

Sometimes people saw but the edge of his black whisker, and the waves of his dark hair, and his lavender-gloved hand resting on the edge of the pew. At other times — when, for instance, during the Litany, he leaned over with his arms resting on the edge of the pew—he was very satisfactorily revealed, and elicited a considerable variety of criticism. Most people said he was very handsome, and so, I think, he was —a dark young man, with very large, soft eyes and very brilliant even teeth. Some people said he was spoiled by an insolent and selfish expression of countenance. Some ladies again said that his figure was perfect, while others alleged that there was a slight curve—not a stoop, but a bend at the shoulder, which they could not quite sanction.

The interest and even anxiety with which this young gentleman was observed and afterward discussed were due to the fact that he was Mr. Cleve Verney, the nephew, not of the present Viscount Verney, but of the man who must very soon be so, and heir-presumptive to the title—a position in the town of Cardyllian hardly inferior to that of Prince of Wales.

But the title of Verney, or rather the right claimant to that title, was then, and had been for many years, in an extremely odd position. In more senses than one a cloud rested upon him. For strong reasons, and in danger, he had vanished more than twenty years ago, and lived, ever since, in a remote part of the world, and in a jealous and eccentric mystery.

While this young gentleman was causing so many reprehensible distractions in the minds of other Christians, he was himself, though not a creature observed it, undergoing a rather wilder aberration of a similar sort himself.

In a small seat at the other side, which seems built for privacy, with a high paneling at the sides and back, sat a young lady, whose beauty riveted and engrossed his attention in a way that seemed to the young gentleman, of many London seasons, almost unaccountable.

There was an old lady with her—a ladylike old woman, he thought her—slight of figure, and rubrically punctual in her uprisings and downsittings. The seat holds four with comfort, but no more. The oak casing round it is high. The light visits it through the glorious old eastern window, mellowed and solemnized —and in this *chiär' oscüro*, the young lady's beauty had a transparent and saddened character which he thought quite peculiar. Altogether he felt it acting upon him with the insidious power of a spell.

The old lady, for the halo of interest of which the girl was the centre included her—was dressed, he at first thought, in black—but now he was nearly sure it was a purple silk.

Though she wore a grave countenance, suitable to the scene and occasion, it was by no means sombre—a cheerful and engaging countenance on the contrary.

The young lady's dress was one of those rich Welsh linseys, which exhibit a drapery of thick-ribbed, dark gray silk, in great measure concealed by a short but ample cloak or coat of black velvet—altogether a costume the gravity of which struck him as demure and piquant.

Leaning over the side of his pew, Mr. Cleve Verney prayed with a remarkable persistence in the direction of this seat. After the Litany he thought her a great deal more beautiful than he had before it, and by the time the Communion Service closed, he was sure he had never seen any one at all so lovely. He could not have fancied, in flesh and blood, so wonderful an embodiment of Guido's portrait of Beatrice Cenci. The exquisite brow, and large hazel eye, so clear and soft, so bold and shy. The face voluptuous, yet pure; funeste but innocent. The rich chestnut hair, the pearly whiteness, and scarlet lips, and the strange, wild, melancholy look—and a shadow of fate. Three quarters, or full face, or momentary profile—in shade now—in light—the same wonderful likeness still. The phantom of Beatrice was before him.

I can't say whether the young lady or the old observed the irregular worship directed toward their pew. Cleve did not think they did. He had no particular wish that they should. In fact, his interest was growing so strangely absorbing that something of that jealousy of observation which indicates a deeper sentiment

than mere admiration had supervened, and Mr. Cleve conducted his reconnoitring with slyness and caution.

That small pew over the way, he was nearly certain, belonged to Malory. Now Malory is a dower house of the Verneys. His own grandmother, the Venerable Dowager Lady Verney, as much to her annoyance the *Morning Post* respectfully called her, was at that time the incumbent. But though she held it with the inflexible gripe of an old lady whose rights were not to be trifled with, she would not reside, and the place was, as I have said, utterly neglected, and the old house very much out of repair.

Why, then, should the Malory pew be thus tenanted? These ladies, he had no doubt, sat there of right—for if the seat had been opened to the congregation at large, in the then state of pressure, it would have been filled. Could they possibly be of kindred to the Verneys, and sit where they did by virtue of an order from the Dowager?

So Cleve Verney began to count up cousins whom he had never seen, and left off no wiser.

Close by this dark Malory pew is a small side door of the church. There is another like it, a little lower down, in the opposite wall, not far from the Verney pew, and through these emerge thin files of worshipers, while the main column shuffles and pushes through the porch. So, when the Rector had pronounced his final blesssing, Cleve Verney having improved the little silence that follows to get his hat and cane into his hand, glided from his seat before the mass of the congregation were astir, and emerging on the little gravel walk, stepped lightly down to the stone stile, from whence you command a view of every exit from the church-yard.

He stood with one foot upon it, like a man awaiting a friend, and looking listlessly toward the church. And as he loitered, a friend did turn up whom he very little expected to see. A young man, though hardly so young as Cleve—good-looking, decidedly, with light golden mustache, and a face so kind, frank, and merry, it made one happy to look at it.

"Ah! Sedley! I had not an idea. What brings you here?" said Cleve, smiling, and shaking his hand moderately, but keeping his large eyes steadily on the distant point at which he expected to see the unknown ladies emerge.

"Down here just for a day or two," answered Tom Sedley. "I was above you in the gallery. Did you see that beautiful creature in the Malory seat, right before you? By Jove, she's a stunning girl. There was an old woman with her. I think I never saw so beautiful a being."

"Well, I did see a pretty girl at the other side of the church, I *think;* isn't *that* she?" said Cleve, as he saw the two ladies—the younger with one of those short black veils which nearly obliterate the face of the wearer behind the intricacies of a thick lace pattern.

"By Jove! so it is," said Sedley; "come along—let us see where they go."

They were walking almost solitarily, followed only by an old servant who carried their books, toward the entrance at the farther side of the church-yard, a small door opening upon a flight of steps by which you descend into one of the deserted back streets of Cardyllian.

Cleve and Sedley pursued as little conspicuously as possible. The quaint street into which the stone stairs led them follows the mouldering shelter of the old town wall.

Looking along the perspective of this street, if such the single row of small old houses confronting the dark ivied wall may be termed, the two young gentlemen saw the figures in pursuit of which they had entered it, proceeding in the direction of Malory.

"We mustn't get *too* near; let us wait a little, and let them go on," suggested Sedley in a whisper, as if the ladies could have overheard them.

Cleve laughed. He was probably the more eager of the two; but some men have no turn for confidences, and Cleve Verney was not in the habit of opening either his plans or his feelings to any one.

CHAPTER II.

ALL THAT THE DRAPER'S WIFE COULD TELL.

This street in a few hundred steps emerging from the little town changes its character into that of a narrow rural road, overhung by noble timber, and descending with a gentle curve toward the melancholy woods of Malory.

"How beautifully she walks, too! By Jove, she's the loveliest being I ever beheld. She's the most perfectly beautiful girl in England. How I wish some d—d fellow would insult her, that I might smash him, and have an excuse for attending her home."

So spoke enthusiastic Tom Sedley, as they paused to watch the retreat of the ladies, leaning over the dwarf stone wall, and half hidden by the furrowed stem of a gigantic ash tree.

From this point, about a quarter of a mile distant from Malory, they saw them enter the wide iron gate and disappear in the dark avenue that leads up to that sombre place.

"*There!* I *said* it was Malory," exclaimed Sedley, laying his hand briskly on Cleve's arm.

"Well, I hope you're pleased; and tell me, now, what stay do you make at Cardyllian, Tom? Can you come over to Ware—not to-morrow, for I'm not quite sure that I shall be there, but on Tuesday, for a day or two?"

No—Tom Sedley couldn't. He must leave to-morrow, or, at latest, on Tuesday morning; and, for to-day, he had promised to go to afternoon service with the Etherages, and then home to tea with them. He was to meet the party on the Green.

So after a little talk, they turned together to-

ward the town; and they parted near the Verney Arms, where Cleve's dog-cart awaited him. Having given his order in the hall, he walked into the coffee-room, in which, seated demurely, and quite alone, he found stout Mrs. Jones, the draper's wife — suave, sedate, wearing a subdued Sabbath smile upon her broad and somewhat sly countenance.

Her smile expanded as Cleve drew near. She made a great and gracious courtesy, and extended her short fat hand, which Cleve Verney took and shook—for the tradition of homelier, if not kindlier times, still lingered in Cardyllian, and there were friendly personal relations between the great family and the dozen and a half of shopkeepers who constituted its commercial strength.

So Cleve Verney joked and talked with her, leaning on the back of a chair, with one knee on the seat of it. He was pleased to have lighted upon such a gossip as good Mrs. Jones, the draper, who was waiting for the return of her husband, who was saying a word to Mr. Watkyn Hughes, in the bar, about a loan of his black horse for a funeral next morning.

"So it seems Lady Verney has got a tenant in Malory?" he said at last.

"Yes, *indeed*, sir," she replied, in her most confidential manner; "and I *hope*—I do *indeed* —it may turn out such a thing as she would like."

Mrs. Jones usually spoke in low and significant tones, and with a mystery and caution worthy of deeper things than she often talked about.

"Why, is there any thing odd?" asked the young gentleman curiously.

"Well, it is *not*, now, *altogether* what I would *wish* for Lady Verney. I haven't seen any of the Malory family, excepting in church to-day; not one, indeed, sir; they are very strange; they never *come* into the town—not once since ever they came to Malory! but *dear* me! you know, sir, that might *be*, and yet every thing as we could wish, mightn't it; yes, sure; still, you know, people *will* be *talking*; it's a pity we don't mind our own business more, and let others be, isn't it, sir?"

"Great pity; but—but what's the matter?" urged Cleve Verney.

"Well, Master Cleve, you know Cardyllian, and how we *do talk* here; I don't say *more* than *other* places, but we *do*, and I do not like *repeatin'* every thing I hear. There's more mischief than good, *I* think, comes of repeatin' stories.

"Oh! come, pray what's the good of a story except to repeat it? I ought to know, perhaps I should tell Lady Verney about it," said Cleve, who was really curious, for nothing could be more quiet than the get-up and demeanor of the ladies.

"They haven't been here, you know, very *long*," murmured Mrs. Jones, earnestly.

"No, I *don't* know. I know nothing about it; *how* long?"

"Well, about five weeks—a little more; and we never saw the gentleman once; he's never been down to the town since he came; never, indeed, sir, not once."

"He shows his sense; doesn't he?"

"Ah, you were always pleasant, Master Cleve, but you don't think *so*; no, you don't *indeed*; his conduct is *really most singular*, he's never been outside the walls of Malory all that time, in the *daylight*; very odd; he has hired Christmass Owen's boat, and he goes out in it *every night*, unless twice, the wind was too high, and Owen didn't choose to venture his boat. He's a *tall* man, Christmass Owen says, and holds himself straight, like an officer, for people *will* be making *enquiries*, you know; and he has *gray* hair; not *quite* white, you know."

"How *should* I know?"

"Ah, ha, you were always *funny*; yes, indeed, but it *is* gray, gone *quite* gray, Christmass Owen says."

"Well, and what about the ladies?" inquired the young gentleman. "*They're* not gone gray, *all?* though I shouldn't wonder much in Malory."

"The *ladies? Well.* There's *two* you know; there's Miss Sheckleton, that's the elderly lady, and all the Malory accounts in the town is opened in her name. Anne Sheckleton, very reg'lar she is. I have nothing to say concerning her. They don't spend a great *deal*, you understand, but their money is *sure*."

"Yes, of course; but, you said, didn't you, that there was something not quite right about them?"

"Oh, dear, no, sir; I did not say quite *that*; nothing *wrong*, no, sure, but very odd, sir, and most *unpleasant*, and that is all."

"And that's a good deal; isn't it?" urged Cleve.

"Well, it *is* something; it is *indeed* a great *deal*," Mrs. Jones emphasized oraculantly.

"And *what is* it, what do you know of them, or the people here, what do they *say?*"

"Well, they say, putting this and that together, and some hints from the servant that comes down to order things up from the town, for servants, you know, will be talking, that the family is *mad*."

"*Mad!*" echoed Cleve.

"That's what they say."

"The whole family are *mad!* and yet continue to manage their affairs as they do! By Jove, it is a comfort to find that people can get on without heads, on emergency."

"They don't say, no, dear me! that *all* that's in the house are mad; *only* the old man and the young lady."

"And what is she mad upon?"

"Well, they don't say. I don't know—melancholy, I do suppose."

"And what is the old gentleman's name?"

"We don't *know*, the *servants don't know*, they say; they were hired by Miss Sheckleton, in Chester, and never saw the old gentleman, nor the young lady, till after they were two or three days in Malory; and one night comes a carriage, with a mad-house gentleman, they do say, a doc-

tor, in charge of the old gentleman and the young lady, poor thing! and so they were handed over by him to Miss Sheckleton."

"And what sort of lunacies do they commit? They're not pulling down the house among them, I hope?"

"Very gentle—very. I'm told, quite, as you may say, *managable*. It's a *very* sad thing, sir, but *what* a world it is! yes, indeed. Isn't it?"

"Ay, so it is.—I've heard that, I think, before."

"You may have heard it from *me*, sir, and it's long been my feeling and opinion, dear me! The longer I live the more melancholy sights I see!"

"How long is Malory let for?"

"Can't say, indeed, sir. That is, they may give it up every three months, but has the right to keep it two whole years, that is, if they *like*, you understand.

"Well, it *is* rather odd. It was they who sat in the Malory seat to-day!"

"That was Miss Sheckleton, was the old lady; and the young one, didn't you think her very pretty, sir?"

"Yes—she's pretty," he answered carelessly. "But I really could not see very well."

"I was very near as she turned to leave—before she took down her vail—and I thought what a really *beautiful* creature she was!"

"And what do they call her?"

"Miss Margaret, sir."

"Margaret! a pretty name—rather. Oh, here's Mr. Jones;" and Mr. Jones was greeted—and talked a little—somewhat more distantly and formally than his good wife had done—and Mr. and Mrs. Jones, with a dutiful farewell, set off upon their Sunday's ramble.

CHAPTER III.

HOME TO WARE.

"MAD!" thought Cleve. "What an awful pity if she is. She doesn't *look* mad—melancholy she may. She does not look *a bit* mad. By Jove, I don't *believe* a word of it. It's utterly out of the question that the quiet old lady there could bring a mad girl to church with her. And thus resolved, Cleve walked out of the coffee-room, and awaiting his conveyance, stood on the steps of the Verney Arms, from whence he saw Wynne Williams, the portly solicitor of Cardyllian, and of a wide circle of comfortable clients round it. Wynne Williams is omniscient. Nothing ever happens in Cardyllian that he does not know with precision.

"Wynne," Cleve called up the quiet little street, and the attorney, looking over his fat shoulder, arrested his deliberate walk, and marched swiftly back, smiling.

So there was another greeting; and some more questions ensued, and answers, and then said Cleve—

"So Malory's let, I hear."

"Yes," said the attorney, with a slight shrug.

"You don't like the bargain, I see," said Cleve.

"It's a mismanaged place, you know. Lady Verney won't spend a shilling on it, and we must only take what we can get. We haven't had a tenant for five years till now."

"And who has taken it?"

"The Rev. Isaac Dixie."

"The devil he has. Why, old Dixie's not mad, is he?"

"No, he's no fool. More like the other thing—rather. Drove a hard bargain—but *I* wouldn't take it myself at the money."

"Doesn't he live there?"

"No. There's an old gentleman and two ladies; one of them an old woman."

"And what's the old gentleman's *name*, and the young lady's?"

"Don't know, indeed; and what does it matter?" The attorney was curious, and had taken some little trouble to find out. "The Reverend Isaac Dixie's the tenant, and Miss Sheckleton manages the family business; and devil a letter ever comes by post here, except to Miss Sheckleton or the servants."

"Old Mother Jones, the draper's wife, over the way, says the girl and the old fellow are mad."

"Don't believe it. More likely he's in a fix, and wants to keep out of sight and hearing just now, and Malory's the very place to hide a fellow in. It's just *possible*, you know, there may be a screw loose in the upper works; but I don't believe it, and don't for the world hint it to the old lady. She's half mad herself about mad people, and if she took that in her head, by Jove, she'd never forgive me," and the attorney laughed uneasily.

"You do think they're mad. By Jove, you *do*. I *know* you think they're mad."

"I *don't* think they're mad. I don't know any thing about them," said the good-humored attorney, with Dundreary whiskers, leaning on the wooden pillar of the Verney Arms, and smiling provokingly in the young man's face.

"Come now, Wynne, I'll not tell the old lady, upon my honor. You may as well tell me all you know. And you *do* know; of *course* you do; you *always* know. And these people living not a mile away! You *must* know."

"I see how it is. She's a pretty girl, and you want to pick up all about her, by way of inquiring after the old gentleman."

Verney laughed, and said—

"Perhaps you're right, though, I assure you, I didn't know it myself. But *is* the old fellow mad, or is there any madness among them?"

"I do assure you, I know no more than you do," laughed Mr. Wynne Williams. "He may be as sober as Solomon, or as mad as a hatter, for any thing *I* know. It's nothing to me. He's only a visitor there, and the young lady, too, for that matter; and our tenant is the Reverend Isaac Dixie."

"Where is Dixie living now?"

"The old shop."

"I know. I wonder he has not wriggled on and up a bit. I always looked on Dixie as the bud of a dignitary; he has had time to burst into a Bishop since I saw him. Dixie and I have had some queer scenes together," and he laughed quietly over his recollections. "He and I spent three months once together in Malory; do you remember? I dare say *he* does. He was tutor and I pupil. Charming time. We used to read in the gun-room. That was the year they had the bricklayers and painters at Ware. Do you remember the day you came in exactly as I shied the ink bottle at his head? I dare say the mark's on the wall still. By Jove, I'd have killed him, I suppose, if I'd had the luck to hit him. You must come over and see me before I go. I'm quite alone; but I can give you a mutton chop and some claret, and I want to show you the rifle I told you of. You'll be delighted with it."

And so this young man, with large dark eyes, smiled and waved his farewell, and, with a groom behind him, drove at a rapid pace down the street, and away toward Ware.

"He'll do that seven miles in five-and-thirty minutes," thought the attorney, looking after him drowsily; and his speculation taking another turn, he thought mistily of his political possibilities, for he had been three years in the House, and was looked upon as a clever young man, and one who, having many advantages, might yet be—who could tell where, and have power to make the fortunes of many deserving attorneys.

Cleve meanwhile was driving at a great pace toward Ware. I don't suppose a town life—a life of vice, a life of any sort, has power to kill the divine spark of romance in a young man born with imagination.

Malory had always had a strange and powerful interest for him. A dower house now, it had once been the principal mansion of his family. Over it, to his eye, hung, like the sombre and glowing phantasms of a cloudy sunset, the story of the romance and the follies and the crimes of generations of the Verneys of Malory. The lordly old timber that rises about its chimneys and gables, seemed to him the mute and melancholy witnesses of by-gone tragedies and glories.

There, too, in the steward's house, a veritable relic of the ancient friary, lived dreamy old Rebecca Mervyn; he wondered how he had forgotten to ask whether she was still there. She had seemed to his boyish fancy one of those delightful German ambiguities—half human, half ghost; her silent presents of taffy, and faint wintry smile and wandering gaze, used to thrill him with "a pleasing terror." He liked her, and yet he would have been afraid to sit alone in her latticed room with that silent lady, after twilight. Poor old Rebecca! It was eight years since he had last seen her tall, sad, silent form—silent, except when she thought herself alone, and used to whisper and babble as she looked with a wild and careworn gaze over the sea, toward the mighty mountains that build it round, line over line, till swell and peak are lost in misty distance. He used to think of the Lady of Branksome Tower, and half believe that old Rebecca was whispering with the spirits of the woods and cataracts and lonely headlands over the water.

"Is old Rebecca Mervyn there still?" he wondered on. "Unless she's dead, she is—for my grandmother would never think of disturbing her, and she shall be my excuse for going up to Malory. I ought to see her."

The door of her quaint tenement stood by the court-yard, its carved stone chimney-top rose by the roof of the dower house, with which, indeed, it was connected. "It won't be like crossing their windows or knocking at their hall door. I shan't so much as enter the court-yard, and I really ought to see the poor old thing."

The duty would not have been so urgent had the face that appeared in church that day been less lovely.

He had never troubled himself for eight years about the existence of old Rebecca. And now that the image, after that long interval, suddenly returned, he for the first time asked himself why old Rebecca Mervyn was ever there? He had always accepted her presence as he did that of the trees, and urns, and old lead statues in the yew walk, as one of the properties of Malory. She was a sort of friend or client of his grandmother's—not an old servant plainly, not even a housekeeper. There was an unconscious refinement and an air of ladyhood in this old woman. His grandmother used to call her Mrs. Mervyn, and treated her with a sort of distinction and distance that had in it both sympathy and reserve.

"I dare say Wynne Williams knows all about her, and I'll go and see her, at all events." So he thought as his swift trotter flew under the noble trees of Ware, along the picturesque road which commands the seaward view of that unrivaled estuary flanked by towering headlands, and old Pandillion, whose distant outline shows like a gigantic sphinx crouching lazily at the brink of the sea. Across the water now he sees the old town of Cardyllian, the church tower and the ruined Castle, and, farther down, sad and sequestered, the dark wood and something of the gray front of Malory blurred in distance, but now glowing with a sort of charm that was fast deepening into interest.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE GREEN OF CARDYLLIAN.

WARE is a great house, with a palatial front of cut stone. The Hon. Kiffyn Fulke Verney seldom sees it. He stands next to the title, and that large residue of the estates which go with it. The title has got for the present into an odd difficulty, and can not assert itself; and those estates are, pending the abeyance, compulsorily

at nurse where they have thriven, quite thrown off their ailments and incumbrances, and grown plethorically robust.

Still the Hon. Kiffyn Fulke Verney is not, as the lawyers say, in perception of one shilling of their revenues. He feels indeed that he has grown in importance—that people seem more pleased to see him, that he is listened to much better, that his jokes are taken and laughed at, and that a sceptical world seems to have come at last to give him credit for the intellect and virtues of which he is conscious. All this, however, is but the shadow of the substance which seems so near and yet is intangible.

No wonder he is a little peevish. His nephew and heir-presumptive—Cleve—runs down now and then for shooting or yachting; but his uncle does not care to visit Ware, and live in a corner of the house. I think he liked the people of Cardyllian and of the region roundabout to suffer and resent with him. So they see his face but seldom.

Cleve Verney sat, after dinner, at an open window of Ware, with one foot on the broad window-stone, smoking his cigar and gazing across the dark blue sheet of water, whose ripples glimmered by this time bright in the moonlight, toward the misty wood of Malory.

Cleve Verney is a young man of accomplishment, and of talents, and of a desultory and tumultuous ambition, which sometimes engrosses him wholly, and sometimes sickens and loses its appetite. He is conceited—affecting indifference, he loves admiration. The object for the time being seizes his whole soul. The excitement of even a momentary pursuit absorbs him. He is reserved, capricious, and impetuous—knows not what self-mortification is, and has a pretty taste for dissimulation.

He is, I think, extremely handsome. I have heard ladies pronounce him fascinating. Of course, in measuring his fascinations, his proximity to a title and great estates was not forgotten; and he is amiable as a man can be who possesses all the qualities I have described, and is selfish besides.

Now Cleve Verney was haunted, or rather possessed for the present, by the beautiful phantom—sane or mad, saint or sinner—who had for so long, in that solemn quietude and monotony so favorable for the reception of fanciful impressions, stood or sat, nun-like, book in hand, before him that day. So far from resisting, he encouraged this little delirium. It helped him through his solitary evening.

When his cigar was out, he still looked out toward Malory. He was cultivating his little romance. He liked the mystery of it. "Margaret—Margaret," he repeated softly. He fancied that he saw a light for a moment in the window of Malory, like a star. He could not be sure; it might be the light of a boat. Still it was an omen—the emblem of life—an answer of hope.

How very capricious all this was. Here was a young man, before whom yearly the new-blown beauties of each London season passed in review—who fancied he had but to choose among them all—who had never experienced a serious passion, hardly even a passing sentiment—now strangely moved and interested by a person whom he had never spoken to—only seen—who had seemed unaffectedly unconscious of his presence, who possibly had not even seen him; of whose kindred and history he knew nothing, and between whom and himself there might stand some impassable gulf.

Cleve was in the mood to write verses, but that relief, like others, won't always answer the invocation of the sufferer. The muse is as coy as death. So instead, he wrote a line to the Rev. Isaac Dixie, of Clay Rectory, in which he said—

"My Dear Dixie:—You remember when I used to call you '*Mr.* Dixie,' and '*Sir.*' I conjure you by the memory of those happy days of innocence and Greek grammar to take pity on my loneliness, and come here to Ware, where you will find me pining in solitude. Come just for a day. I know your heart is in your parish, and I shan't ask you to stay longer. The *Wave*, my cutter, is here; you used to like a sail (he knew that the Rev. Isaac Dixie suffered unutterably at sea, and loathed all nautical enjoyments), or you can stay in the house, and tumble over the books in the library. I will make you as comfortable as I can; only do come and oblige,

"Your old pupil,

"Cleve Verney."

"P.S.—I shall be leaving this *immediately*, so pray answer in person, by return. You'll get this at nine o'clock to-morrow morning, at Clay. If you take the 11.40 train to Llwynon—you see I have my 'Bradshaw' by me—you will be there at four, and a fly will run you across to Cardyllian in little more than an hour, and there you will find me, expecting, at the Chancery; you know Wynne Williams's old house in Castle Street. I assure you, I really want to see you, *particularly*, and you must not fail me. I shan't detain you one moment longer than your parish business will allow. Heavens, what a yarn have I post-scribbled!"

He walked down to the pretty little village of Ware, which consists of about a dozen and a half of quaint little houses, and a small venerable church, situated by the road that winds through a wooded glen, and round the base of the hill by the shore of the moonlighted waters.

It was a romantic ramble. It was pleasanter, because it commanded, across the dark blue expanse, with its flashing eddies, a misty view, now hardly distinguishable, of Malory, and, pleasanter still, because his errand was connected with those tenants of old lady Verney's, of whom he was so anxious to learn *any* thing.

When Tom Sedley, with the light whiskers, merry face, and kind blue eyes, had parted company that afternoon, he walked down to the green of Cardyllian. In the middle of Septem-

ber there is a sort of second season there; you may then see a pretty gathering of muslins of all patterns, and silks of every hue, floating and rustling over the green, with due admixture of

White waistcoats and black,
Blue waistcoats and gray,

with all proper varieties of bonnet and hat, pork-pie, wide-awake, Jerry, and Jim Crow. There are nautical gentlemen, and gentlemen in Knickerbockers; fat commercial gents in large white waistcoats and starched buff cravats; touring curates in spectacles and "chokers," with that smile proper to the juvenile cleric, curiously meek and pert; all sorts of persons, in short, making brief holiday, and dropping in and out of Cardyllian, some just for a day and off again in a fuss, and others dawdling away a week, or perhaps a month or two, serenely.

Its heyday of fashion has long been past and over; but though the "fast" people have gone elsewhere, it is still creditably frequented. Tom Sedley was fond of the old town. I don't think he would have reviewed the year at its close, with a comfortable conscience, if he had not visited Cardyllian, "slow" as it certainly was, some time in its course.

It was a sunny Sunday afternoon, the green looked bright, and the shingle glittered lazily beyond it, with the estuary rippling here and there into gleams of gold, away to the bases of the glorious Welsh mountains, which rise up from the deepest purple to the thinnest gray, and with many a dim rift and crag, and wooded glen, and slope, varying their gigantic contour.

Tom Sedley, among others, showed his reverence for the Sabbath, by mounting a well brushed chimney-pot. No one, it is well established, can pray into a Jerry. The musical bell from the gray church tower hummed sweetly over the quaint old town, and the woods and hollows round about; and on a sudden, quite near him, Tom Sedley saw the friends of whom he had been in search!

The Etherage girls, as the ancient members of the family still called them, were two in number. Old Vane Etherage of Hazelden, a very pretty place, about twenty minutes' walk from the green of Cardyllian, has been twice married. The result is, that the two girls belong to very different periods. Miss Charity is forty-five by the parish register, and Miss Agnes, of the blue eyes and golden hair, is just nineteen and four months.

Both smiling after their different fashions, advanced upon Tom, who strode up to them with his chimney-pot in one hand, and waving and kissing the other, and smiling prodigiously.

Miss Charity of the long waist, and long thin brown face, and somewhat goggle eyes, was first up, and asked him very volubly at least eleven kind questions, before she had done shaking his hand, all which he answered them, laughing, and at last, said he—

"Little Agnes, are you going to cut me? How well you look! Certainly there's no place on earth like Cardyllian for pretty complexions, is there?"

He turned for confirmation to the curiously brown thin countenance of Miss Charity, which smiled and nodded acquiescence. "You're going to-morrow, you say; that's a great pity; every thing looking so beautiful."

"*Every thing*," acquiesced Tom Sedley, with an arch glance at Agnes, who blushed and said merrily—

"You're just the same old fool you always were, Tom; and we don't mind one word you say."

"Aggie, my dear!" said her sister, who carried down the practice of reproof from the nursery; and it was well, I suppose, that Miss Aggie had that arbitress of proprieties always beside her.

"I suppose you have no end of news to tell me. Is any one dying, or any one christened? I'll hear it all by-and-by. And who are your neighbors at Malory?"

"Oh, quite charming!" exclaimed Miss Agnes eagerly. "The most mysterious people that ever came to a haunted house. You know Malory has a ghost."

"Nonsense, child. Don't mind her, Mr. Sedley," said Miss Charity. "I *wonder* how you can talk so foolishly."

"Oh, that's nothing new. Malory's been haunted as long as *I* can remember," said Tom.

"Well, I did not think Mr. Sedley could have talked like that!" exclaimed Miss Charity.

"Oh, by Jove, I *know* it. *Every one* knows it that ever lived here. Malory's *full* of ghosts. None but very queer people could think of living there; and, Miss Agnes, you were going to say—"

"Yes, they are *awfully* mysterious. There's an old man who stalks about at night, like the ghost in "Hamlet," and never speaks, and there's a beautiful young lady, and a gray old woman who calls herself Anne Sheckleton. They shut themselves up so closely—you can't imagine. Some people think the old man is a maniac, or a terrible culprit."

"Highly probable," said Tom; "and the old woman a witch, and the young lady a vampire."

"Well, hardly that," laughed Miss Agnes, "for they came to church to-day."

"How you *can* both talk such folly," interposed Miss Charity.

"But you know they would not let Mr. Pritchard up to the house," pleaded Miss Agnes. Mr. Pritchard, the curate, you know"—this was to Tom Sedley—"he's a funny little man—he preached to-day—very good and zealous and all that—and he wanted to push his way up to the house, and the cross old man they have put to keep the gate took him by the collar, and was going to beat him. Old Captain Sharpnell says he *did* beat him with a child's cricket-bat; but *he hates* Mr. Pritchard, so I'm not sure; but, at all events, he was turned out in disgrace, and blushes and looks dignified ever since whenever Malory is mentioned.

Now, every one here knows what a good little man poor Mr. Pritchard is, so it must have been sheer hatred of religion that led to his being turned out in that way."

"But the ladies were in church, my dear Aggie; we *saw* them, Mr. Sedley, *to-day;* they were in the Malory pew."

"Oh, indeed?" said Tom Sedley, artfully; "and you saw them pretty distinctly, I dare say."

"The young lady is quite beautiful, *we* thought. I'm so sorry you were not in our seat; though, indeed, people ought not to be staring about them in church; but you would have admired her immensely."

"Oh, I saw them. They were the people nearly opposite to the Verney's seat, in the small pew? Yes, they *were*—that is, the young lady, I mean, was perfectly lovely," said little Tom, who could not with any comfort practice a reserve.

"See, the people are beginning to hurry off to church; it must be time to go," said Charity.

So the little party walked up by the court-house into Castle Street, and so turned into quaint old Church Street, walking demurely, and talking very quietly to the solemn note of the old bell.

CHAPTER V.

A VISIT TO HAZELDEN.

They all looked toward the Malory seat on taking their places in their own; but that retreat was deserted now, and remained so, as Tom Sedley at very brief intervals ascertained, throughout the afternoon service; after which, with a secret sense of disappointment, honest Sedley escorted the Etherage "girls" up the steep road that leads through the wooded glen of Hazelden to the hospitable house of old Vane Etherage.

Every one in that part of the world knows that generous, pompous, and boisterous old gentleman. You could no more visit Cardyllian without seeing Vane Etherage, than you could visit Naples without seeing Vesuvius. He is a fine portly bust, but little more. In his waking hours he lives alternately in his Bath chair and in the great leathern easy-chair in his study. He manages to shuffle very slowly, leaning on his servant on one side and propped on his crutch at the other, across the hall of the Cardyllian Club, which boasts about six-and-thirty members, besides visitors, and into the billiard-room, where he takes possession of the chair by the fire, and enjoys the agreeable conversation of Captain Shrapnell, hears all about the new arrivals, who they are, what screws are loose, and where, and generally all the gossip and scandal of the little commonwealth of Cardyllian.

Vane Etherage had served in the navy, and, I believe, reached the rank of captain. In Cardyllian he was humorously styled "the Admiral," when people spoke *of* him, not *to* him; for old Etherage was fiery and consequential, and a practical joke which commenced in a note from an imaginary secretary, announcing that "The Badger's Hunt" would meet at Hazelden House on a certain day, and inducing hospitable preparations for the entertainment of those nebulous sportsmen, was like to have had a sanguinary ending. It was well remembered that when young Sniggers of Sligh Farm apologized on that occasion, old Etherage had arranged with Captain Shrapnell, who was to have been his second, that the Admiral was to fight in his Bath chair—an evidence of resource and resolution which was not lost upon his numerous friends.

"How do you do, Sedley? Very glad to see you, Tom—very glad indeed, sir. You'll come to-morrow and dine; you must, indeed—and next day. You know our Welsh mutton—you do—you know it well; it's better here than in any other place in the world—in the whole world, sir; the Hazelden mutton, and, egad, you'll come here—you shall, sir—and dine here with us to-morrow; mind, you shall."

The Admiral wore a fez, from beneath which his gray hair bushed out rather wildly, and he was smoking through an enormous hubble-bubble pipe as Tom Sedley entered his study, accompanied by the ladies.

"He says he's to go away to-morrow," said Miss Charity, with an upbraiding look at Sedley.

"Pooh—nonsense—not *he*—not *you*, Tom—not a bit, sir. We won't let you. Girls, we won't *allow* him to go. Eh?—No—no—you dine here to-morrow, *and* next day."

"You're very kind, sir; but I promised, if I am still in Cardyllian to-morrow, to run over to Ware, and dine with Verney."

"*What* Verney?"

"Cleve Verney?"

"D— him."

"Oh, papa!" exclaimed Miss Charity, grimly.

"Boh!—I *hate* him—I hate *all* the Verneys," bawled old Vane Etherage, as if hating were a duty and a generosity.

"*Oh*—no, papa—you *know* you don't—that would be *extremely wicked*," said Miss Charity, with that severe superiority with which she governed the Admiral.

"Begad, you're always telling me I'm wicked—and we know where the *wicked* go—that's Catechism, I believe—so I'd like to know where's the difference between that and d—ing a fellow?" exclaimed the portly bust, and blew off his wrath with a testy laugh.

"I think we had better put off our bonnets and coats. The language is becoming rather strong—and the tobacco," said Miss Charity, with dry dignity, to her sister, leaving the study as she did so.

"I thought it might be that *Kiffyn* Verney—the uncle fellow—Honorable Kiffyn Verney—*dis*-honorable, *I* call him—that old dog, sir,

he's no better than a cheat—and I'd be glad of an opportunity to tell him so to his face, sir—you have no *idea*, sir, how he has behaved to me!"

"He has the character of being a very honorable man, sir—I'm sorry you think so differently," said honest Tom Sedley, who always stood up for his friends and their kindred—"and Cleve—I've known from my childhood, and I assure you, sir, a franker or more generous fellow I don't suppose there is on earth."

"I know nothing about the jackanape, except that he's nephew of his roguish old uncle," said the florid old gentleman with the short high nose and double chin. "He wants to take up Llanderis, and he *shan't have* it. He's under covenant to renew the lease, and the devil of it is, that between me and Wynne Williams we have put the lease astray—and I can't find it—nor *he* either—but it will turn up—I don't care twopence about it—but no one shall humbug me—I won't be gammoned, sir, by all the Verneys in England. *Stuff*—sir!"

Then the conversation took a happier turn. The weather was sometimes a little squally with the Admiral—but not often—genial and boisterous—on the whole sunny and tolerably serene—and though he sometimes threatened high and swore at his servants, they knew it did not mean a great deal, and liked him.

People who lived all the year round in Cardyllian, which from November to May, every year, is a solitude, fall into those odd ways and little self-indulgences which gradually metamorphose men of the world into humorists and grotesques. Given a sparse population, and difficult intercommunication, which in effect constitute solitude, and you have the conditions of barbarism. Thus it was that Vane Etherage had grown uncouth to a degree that excited the amazement of old contemporaries who happened from time to time to look in upon his invalided retirement at Cardyllian.

The ladies and Tom Sedley, in the drawing-room, talked very merrily at tea, while old Vane Etherage, in his study, with the door between the rooms wide open, amused himself with a nautical volume and his terrestrial globe.

"So," said Miss Agnes, "you admired the Malory young lady—Margaret, our maid says, she is called—very much to-day?"

"I did, by Jove. Didn't you?" said Tom, well pleased to return to the subject.

"Yes," said Agnes, looking down at her spoon—"Yes, I admired her; that is, her features are very regular; she's what I call extremely handsome; but there are prettier girls."

"*Here*, do you mean?"

"Yes—here."

"And who are they?"

"Well, I don't say here *now*; but I do think those Miss Dartmores, for instance, who were here last year, and used to wear those blue dresses, were decidedly prettier. The heroine of Malory, whom you have fallen in love with, seems to me to want animation."

"Why, she couldn't show a great deal of animation over the Litany," said Tom.

"I did not see her then; I happened to be praying myself during the Litany," said Miss Agnes, recollecting herself.

"It's more than *I* was," said Tom.

"You ought not to talk that way, Mr. Sedley. It isn't *nice*. I wonder you can," said Miss Charity.

"I would not say it, of course, to strangers," said Tom. "But then, I'm so intimate here—and it's really true, that is, I mean, it was to-day."

"I wonder what you go to church for," said Miss Charity.

"Well, of course, you know, it's to pray; but I look at the bonnets a little, also; every fellow does. By Jove, if they'd only say truth, I'm certain the clergymen peep—I often saw them. There's that little fellow, the Rev. Richard Pritchard, the curate, you know—I'd swear I've seen that fellow watching you, Agnes, through the chink in the reading-desk door, while the sermon was going on; and I venture to say he did not hear a word of it."

"You ought to tell the rector, if you really saw that," said Miss Charity, severely.

"Pray, do no such thing," entreated Agnes; "a pleasant situation for me!"

"Certainly, if Mr. Pritchard behaves himself as you describe," said Miss Charity; "but I've been for hours shut up in the same room with him—sometimes here, and sometimes at the school—about the children, and the widows' fund, and the parish charities, and I never observed the slightest levity; but you are joking, I'm sure."

"I'm *not*, upon my honor. I don't say it's the least harm. I don't see how he can help it; I know if *I* were up in the air—in a reading-desk, with a good chink in the door, where I thought no one could see me, and old Doctor Splayfoot preaching his pet sermon over my head—*wouldn't* I peep?—that's all."

"Well, I really think, if he makes a habit of it, I *ought* to speak to Doctor Splayfoot. I think it's my *duty*," said Miss Charity, sitting up very stiffly, as she did when she spoke of duty; and when once the notion of a special duty got into her head, her inflexibility, as Tom Sedley and her sister Agnes knew, was terrifying.

"For mercy's sake, my dear Charry, do think of *me!* If you tell Doctor Splayfoot, he'll be certain to tell it all to Wynne Williams and Doctor Price Apjohn, and every creature in Cardyllian will know every thing about it, and a great deal more, before two hours; and once for all, if that ridiculous story is set afloat, into the church door I'll never set my foot again."

Miss Agnes's pretty face had flushed crimson, and her lip quivered with distress.

"How *can* you be such a fool, Aggie! I'll only say it was at *our seat*, and no one can possibly tell which it was at—you or I; and I'll

certainly tell Doctor Splayfoot that Mr. Sedley saw it."

"And I'll tell the Doctor," said Sedley, who enjoyed the debate immensely, "that I neither saw nor said any such thing."

"I don't think, Thomas Sedley, you'd do any thing so excessively wicked!" exclaimed Miss Charity, a little fiercely.

"Try me," said Tom, with an exulting little laugh.

"Every *gentleman* tells the truth," thrust she.

"Except where it makes mischief," parried Tom, with doubtful morality and another mischievous laugh.

"Well, I suppose I had better say nothing of *Christianity*. But what *you* do is your own affair! *my* duty I'll perform. I shall think it over; and I shan't be ruffled by any folly intended to annoy me." Miss Charity's thin brown cheeks had flushed to a sort of madder crimson, Excepting these flashes of irritability, I can't charge her with many human weaknesess. "I'll not say *who* he looked at—I've promised that; but unless I change my present opinion, Doctor Splayfoot shall hear the whole thing to-morrow. I think in a clergyman any such conduct in church is *unpardonable*. The effect on other people is positively ruinous. *You*, for instance, would not have talked about such things in the light you do, if you had not been encouraged in it, by seeing a clergyman conducting himself so."

"Mind, you've *promised* poor little Agnes you'll not bring her into the business, no matter what *I* do," said Sedley.

"I have, certainly."

"Well, I'll stay in Cardyllian to-morrow, and I'll see Doctor Splayfoot." Sedley was buttoning his coat and pulling on his gloves, with a wicked smile on his good-humored face. "And I'll tell him that you think the curate ogles you through a hole in the reading-desk. That *you* like *him*, and *he's* very much gone about *you*; and that you wish the affair brought to a point; and that you're going to appeal to him—Doctor Splayfoot—to use his authority either to effect *that*, or to stop the ogling. I will, upon my honor!"

"And I shall speak to papa to prevent it," said Miss Charity, who was fierce and literal.

"And that will bring about a duel, and he'll be shot in his Bath chair, and I shall be hanged"—old Vane Etherage, with his spectacles on, was plodding away serenely at the little table by the fire, over his *Naval Chronicle*—"and Pritchard will be deprived of his curacy, and you'll go mad, and Agnes will drown herself like Ophelia, and a nice little tragedy you'll have brought about. Good-night; I'll not disturb him"—he glanced toward the unconscious Admiral—"I'll see you both to-morrow, after I've spoken to the Rector." He kissed his hand, and was gone.

CHAPTER VI.

MALORY BY MOONLIGHT.

When Tom Sedley stepped out from the glass door on the gravel walk, among the autumn flowers and the evergreens in the pleasant moonlight, it was just nine o'clock, for in that primitive town and vicinage people keep still wonderfully early hours.

It is a dark and lonely walk down the steep Hazelden road, by the side of the wooded glen, from whose depths breaks and rises the noise of the mill stream. The path leads you down the side of the glen, with dense forest above and below you; the rocky steep ascending at the left hand, the wooded precipice descending into utter darkness at your right, and beyond that, black against the sky, the distant side of the wooded ravine. Cheery it was to emerge from the close overhanging trees, and the comparative darkness, upon the high road to Cardyllian, which follows the sweep of the estuary to the high street of the town, already quiet as at midnight.

The moon shone so broad and bright, the landscape looked so strange, and the air was so frosty and pleasant, that Tom Sedley could not resist the temptation to take a little walk which led him over the Green, and up the steep path overhanging the sea, from which you command so fine a view of the hills and headlands of the opposite side, and among other features of the landscape, of Malory, lying softly in its dark and misty woodlands.

Moonlight, distance, hour, solitude, aided the romance of my friend Tom Sedley, who stood in the still air and sighed toward that antique house.

With arms folded, his walking-cane grasped in his right hand, and passed, sword fashion, under his left arm, I know not what martial and chivalric aspirations concerning death and combat rose in his good-natured heart, for in some temperaments the sentiment of love is mysteriously associated with the combative, and our homage to the gentler sex connects itself magnanimously with images of wholesale assault and battery upon the other. Perhaps if he could have sung, a stave or two might have relieved his mind; or even had he been eloquent in the language of sentiment. But his vocabulary, unhappily, was limited, and remarkably prosaic, and not even having an appropriate stanza by rote, he was fain to betake himself to a cigar, smoking which he at his leisure walked down the hill toward Malory.

Half way down, he seated himself upon the dwarf wall, at the roadside, and by the ivied stem of a huge old tree, smoked at his ease, and sighed now and then.

"I can't understand it—it is like some confounded witchcraft," said he. "I *can't* get her out of my head."

I dare say it was about the same time that his friend Cleve Verney was performing, though not with so sublime an enthusiasm, his romantic devotions in the same direction, across the flickering water, from Ware.

stood looking from the shore; that cloak thing is loose to be sure; but, by Jove, she might have been a girl almost; and what large eyes she has got, and a well-shaped face. She must have been quite charming, about a hundred years ago; she's not the mother: she's too old; a grand-aunt, perhaps; what a long talk we had, and I such a fool, listening to all that rubbish, and never getting in a word about the people, that peerless creature!"

His walk home to Cardyllian was desultory and interrupted. I should not like to risk my credit by relating how often he halted on his way, and how long, to refresh his eyes with the dim outlines of the trees and chimneys of Malory; and how, very late and melancholy and abstracted, he reached his crib in the Verney Arms.

Early next morning, in pursuance of a clever idea, Tom Sedley made, I admit, his most picturesque and becoming toilet. It consisted of his black velvet knickerbocker suit, with those refined jack-boots of shining leather, and the most charming jerry that had ever appeared in Cardyllian, and away he marched over the hill, while the good people of the town were chumping their muffins and sipping their tea, to the back gate of Malory.

It stood half open, and with as careless a boldness as he could assume, in he went, and walked confidently up the straight farm-yard lane, girt with high thorn hedges. Here, bribing a rustic who showed symptoms of churlishness with half a crown, he was admitted into a sort of farm-yard, under pretext of examining the old monastic chapel and refectory, now used as a barn, and some other relics of the friary, which tourists were wont to admire.

From the front window of the refectory there is a fine view of the distant mountains. Also, as Tom Sedley recollected, a foreground view, under the trees, in front of the hall door, and there, with a sudden bound at his heart, he beheld the two ladies who had yesterday occupied the Malory pew, the old and the young, busy about the flower-bed, with garden gauntlets on, and trowel in hand.

They were chatting together cheerily enough, but he could not hear what they said. The young lady now stood up from her work, in a dress which looked to him like plain holland; she had on one of those poked bonnets of the same material, which were very effectual sun-shades, and became some faces so well, when ruralizing young ladies wore them, some years ago.

The young lady had pushed hers a little back, and stood on the grass, at the edge of the flowers, with her trowel glittering in the early sun in her slender right hand, which rested upon her left; her pretty right foot was advanced a little on the short grass, and showed just its tip over the edge of the flower-bed. A homely dress and rustic appliances. But, oh! that oval, beautiful face!

Tom Sedley—the "peeping Tom" of this story—from his deep monastic window between the parting of the tall trees looked down upon this scene in a breathless rapture. From the palmy days of the Roman Pantheon down, was ever Flora so adored?

From under his Gothic arch, in his monkish shade, Tom could have stood, he fancied, forever, gazing as friar has seldom gazed upon his pictured saint, on the supernatural portrait which his enthusiasm worshiped.

The young lady, as I have described her, looking down upon her old companion, said something with a little nod, and smiled; then she looked up at the tree tops from where the birds were chirping; so Tom had a fair view of her wonderful face, and though he felt himself in imminent danger of detection, he could not move. Then her eyes, with a sidelong glance, dropped on the window where he stood, and passed on instantly.

With the instinct which never deceives us, he felt her glance touch him, and knew that he was detected. The young lady turned quietly, and looked seaward for a few moments. Tom relieved his suspense with a sigh; he hoped he might pass muster for a tourist, and that the privileges of such visitors had not been abridged by the recluses.

The young lady then quietly turned and resumed her work, as if nothing had happened; but, I think, she said something to her elderly companion, for that slim lady, in a tweed shawl, closely broached across her breast, stood up, walked a step or two backward upon the grass, and looked straight up at the window, with the inquisitive frown of a person a little dazzled or near-sighted.

Honest Tom Sedley, who was in a rather morbid state all this morning, felt his heart throb again, and drum against his ribs, as he affected to gaze in a picturesque absorption upon the distant headlands.

The old lady, on the other hand, having distinctly seen in the deep-carved panel of that antique wall the full-length portrait of our handsome young friend, Tom Sedley, in his killing knickerbocker suit of black velvet, with his ivory-headed cane in his hand and that "stunning" jerry which so exactly suited his countenance, and of which he believed no hatter but his own possessed the pattern, or could produce a similar masterpiece.

The old lady with her hand raised to fend off the morning sun that came flickering through the branches on her wrinkled forehead, and her light gray eyes peering on him, had no notion of the awful power of her gaze upon that "impudent young man."

With all his might Tom Sedley gazed at the Welsh headlands, without even winking, while he felt the basilisk eye of the old spinster in gray tweed upon him. So intense was his stare, that old Pandillion at last seemed to nod his mighty head, and finally to submerge himself in the sea. When he ventured a glance downward, he saw Miss Anne Sheckleton with quick

steps entering the house, while the young lady had recommenced working at a more distant flower-bed with the same quiet diligence.

It was to be feared that the old lady was taking steps for his expulsion. He preferred anticipating her measures, and not caring to be caught in the window, left the refectory, and walked down the stone stairs, whistling and tapping the wall with the tip of his cane.

To him, as the old play-books say, entered from the side next the house, and just as he set the sole of his resplendent boot upon the paving-stones, a servant—short, strong, and surly was the man. He did not seem disposed for violence, however, for he touched an imaginary hat-brim as he came up, and informed Mr. Sedley, who was properly surprised and pained to hear it, that he had in fact committed a trespass; that since it had been let, the place was no longer open to the inspection of tourists; and, in short, that he was requested to withdraw.

Tom Sedley was all alacrity and regret. He had never been so polite to a groom in all his life. The man followed him down the back avenue, to see him out, which at another time would have stirred his resentment; and when he held the gate open for him to emerge, Tom gave him no less than three half-crowns—a prodigality whereat his eyes opened, if not his heart, and he made a gruff apology for the necessities imposed by duty, and Tom interrupted him with—

"Quite right, perfectly right; you could do nothing else. I hope the la— your master is not vexed. You must say I told you to mention how very much pained I was at having made such a mistake. Say that I, Mr. Sedley, regret it very much, and beg to apologize. Pray don't forget. Good-morning; and I'm very sorry for having given *you* so much trouble—this long walk."

This tenderness his bow-legged conductor was also in a mood to receive favorably. In fact, if he had not told him his name was Sedley, he might have settled affirmatively the question at that moment before his mind—whether the intruder from whom silver flowed so naturally and refreshingly might not possibly be the Prince of Wales himself, who had passed through the village of Ware, only seven miles away, three weeks before.

CHAPTER VIII.

A NIGHT SAIL.

Poor Tom Sedley! The little excitement of parting with the bull-necked keeper of his "garden of beauty" over, his spirits sunk. He could not act the unconscious tourist again, and recommit the premeditated mistake of the morning. His exclusion was complete.

Tom Sedley paid a visit that day at Hazelden, and was depressed, and dull, and absent to such a degree, that Miss Charity Etherage, after he had gone away, canvassed the matter very earnestly, and wondered whether he was quite well, and hoped he had not had bad news from London.

I don't know how Tom got over all that day; but at about four o'clock, having paid his penny at the toll-gate of the pier of Cardyllian, he was pacing up and down that breezy platform, and discussing with himself the possibility of remaining for another Sunday, on the chance of again seeing the Malory ladies in church.

Lifting up his eyes, in his meditation, he saw a cutter less than a mile away, making swiftly for the pierhead, stooping to the breeze as she flew, and beating up the spray in sparkling clouds from her bows. His practiced eye recognized at a glance the "Flake," the victorious yacht of Cleve Verney. With this breeze it was a run without a tack from Ware jetty.

In less than five minutes she furled her sails, and dropped anchor close to the pier stair, and Cleve Verney in another minute stepped upon it from his punt.

"You're to come back in her, to Ware, this evening," said he, as they shook hands. "I'm so glad I've found you. I've to meet a friend at the Verney Arms, but our talk won't take very long; and how have you been amusing yourself all day? Rather slow, isn't it?"

Tom Sedley told his story.

"Well, and what's the *name?*" inquired Cleve.

"I can't tell; they don't know at the hotel; the Etherages don't know. I asked Castle Edwards, and *he* doesn't know either," said Sedley.

"Yes, but that fellow, the servant, who turned you out at Malory—"

"He did not turn me out. I was *going*," interrupted Tom Sedley.

"Well, who *saw* you out? You made him a present; he'd have told you, of course. *Did* he?"

"I didn't ask him."

"Come, that's being very delicate indeed! All I can say is, if I were as spoony as you are on that girl, I'd have learned all about her long ago. It's nothing to me; but if you find out her name, I know two or three fellows in town who know every thing about every body, and I'll make out the whole story—that is, if she's any body."

"By Jove! that's very odd. There he *is*, just gone into the Golden Lion, that groom, that servant, that Malory man," exclaimed Tom Sedley very eagerly, and staring hard at the open door of the quaint little pot-house.

"Well, go; give him a pound, it's well worth it," laughed Cleve. "I'm serious, if you want to learn it; no fellow like that can resist a pound; and if *you* tell me the name, I'll make you out all the rest, I really will, when I get to town. There, don't let him get off, and you'll find me at the Verney Arms."

So saying, Cleve, nodding his irresolute friend toward the Golden Lion, walked swiftly away to meet the Reverend Isaac Dixie. But Dixie was not at the Chancery; only a letter, to say that "most unhappily" that morning Clay Rectory was to undergo an inspection by a Commissioner

of Dilapidations; but that, D. V., he would place himself next day, at the appointed hour, at his honored pupil's disposal.

"Those shovel-hatted martinets! they never allow a minute for common sense, or any thing useful — always pottering over their clerical drill and pipe clay," said Cleve, who, when an idea once entered his mind, pursued it with a terrible concentration, and hated an hour's delay.

So out he came disappointed, and joined Sedley near the Golden Lion.

They said little for a time, but walked on, side by side, and found themselves sauntering along the road toward Malory together.

"Well, Sedley, I forgot, — what about that man? did he tell you any thing?"

"I do believe if a fellow once allows a girl to get into his head, ever so little, he's in a sort of way drunk—worse than drunk—systematically foolish," said honest Sedley, philosophizing. "I've been doing nothing but idiotic things ever since church-time yesterday."

"Well, but what did he say?"

"He took the pound, and devil a thing he said. He wouldn't tell any thing about them. I give you leave to laugh at me. I know I'm the greatest ass on earth, and I think he's the ugliest brute I ever saw, and the most uncivil; and, by Jove, if I stay here much longer, I think he'll get all my money from me. He doesn't ask for it, but I go on giving it to him; I can't help it; the beast!"

"Isn't there a saying about a sage, or something, and his money being soon parted?" asked Cleve. "I think if I were so much gone about a girl as you are, and on such easy terms with that fellow, and tipped him so handsomely, I'd have learned her name, at least, before now."

"I can't; every thing goes wrong with me. Why should I risk my reason, and fall in love with the moon? The girl wouldn't look at me; by Jove, she'll never even *see* me; and it's much better so, for nothing can possibly come of it but pain to me, and fun to every one else. The late train does not stop at our station. I can't go to-night; but, by Jove, I'll be off in the morning. I *will*. Don't you think I'm right, Cleve?"

Tom Sedley stopped short, and faced his friend—who was, in most matters, his oracle—earnestly, laying his hand upon his arm. Cleve laughed at his vehemence, for he knew Tom's impulsive nature, his generous follies, and terrible impetuosity, and, said he — "Right, Tom; always a philosopher! Nothing like the radical cure, in such a case, absence. If the cards won't answer, try the dice, if they won't do, try the balls. I'm afraid this is a bad venture; put your heart to sea in a sieve! No, Tom, that precious freightage is for a more substantial craft. I suppose you have seen your last of the young lady, and it would be a barren fit of friendship to say that I believe you have made any impression. Therefore save yourself, fly, and try what absence will do, and work and play, and eating and drinking, and sleeping abundantly in a distant scene, to dissipate the fumes of your intoxication, steal you away from the enchantress, and restore you to yourself. Therefore I echo—go."

"I'm sure you think it, though you're half joking," said Tom Sedley.

"Well, let us come on. I've half a mind to go up myself and have a peep at the refectory," said Cleve.

"To what purpose?"

"Archæology," said Cleve.

"If you go in there, after what occurred this morning, by Jove, *I'll* not wait for you," said Sedley.

"Well, come along; there's no harm, I suppose, in passing by. The Queen's highway, I hope, isn't shut up," answered Verney.

Sedley sighed, looked toward Malory, and not being in a mood to resist, walked on toward the enchanted forest and castle, by his companion's side.

When they came by the dark and narrow cross-road that skirts the southern side of Malory to the farm-yard gate, nailed on its pier, on a square bit of board, in fresh black and white paint, they read the following words:—

NOTICE.

No admission at this gate to any but servants or others employed at Malory.

Any person found trespassing within the walls will be prosecuted according to law.

— September, 18—.

When the young men, in a momentary silence, read this warning, the ingenuous countenance of Tom Sedley flushed crimson to the very roots of his hair, and Cleve Verney was seized with a fit of laughter that grew more and more violent the more grave and reproachful grew Tom Sedley's aspect.

"Well, Tom, I think, if we have any dignity left, we had better turn our backs upon this inhospitable refectory, and seek comfort elsewhere. By Jove! a pretty row you must have made up there this morning to oblige the Governor to declare the place in a state of siege, and mount his artillery."

"Come away, Cleve; that is, as soon as you've done laughing at that board. Of course you know as well as I do that my coming in and looking, as I hope any gentleman might, at that stupid old barn this morning, could not possibly be the cause of that offensive notice. If you think it is pointed at me, of course *it's* more amusing, but if not, hang me if I can see the joke."

Tom Sedley was out of spirits, and a little testy, and very silent all the way back to Cardyllian. He refused Cleve's invitation to Ware. He made up his mind to return to London in the morning; and this being his last evening in this part of the world, he must spend it at Haseldon.

So these young gentlemen dined together at the Verney Arms, and it grew dark as they sat by the open window at their wine, and the moon got up and silvered the distant peaks of shadowy

mountains, and they grew silent and dreamy as they might in the spell of distant music.

But the people of Hazelden kept early hours, and Tom Sedley suddenly recollected that he must go. They parted, therefore, excellent friends, for Sedley had no suspicion that Cleve was his rival, and Cleve could afford to be amused at Sedley's rivalry.

When Verney got on board there was a light breeze. "We'll run down toward Penruthyn Priory," said he; and round went the cutter, leaning with the breeze, and hissing and snorting through the gentle swell as she flew on toward the headland on which stands that pretty monastic ruin.

She glided into the black shadow cast by the solemn wall of cloud that now hid the moon from sight, away from the hundred star-like lights of Cardyllian, flying swiftly backward on the left, close under the shapeless blackness of the hill, that rises precipitously from the sea, and over which lies the path from the town to Malory, and onward by the wooded grounds of that old mansion, now an indistinguishable mass of darkness, whose outline was hardly visible against the sky.

I dare say the thought of crossing the lights of these windows had its share in prompting this nautical freak, and toward these Cleve's gaze was turned, when, on a sudden, the man looking out at the bows shouted "Starboard;" but before the boat had time to feel the helm, the end of the cutter's boom struck the mast of a small boat; a shout from several voices rose suddenly, and was almost instantaneously far behind. Round went the yacht; they hailed the boat.

"She's lost her mast, I think," said one of Cleve's men.

"D— you, where are your lights?" shouted a stern, fierce voice.

"No one overboard?" cried Cleve.

"No, no. You'll be the *Wave*, sure? Mr. Cleve Verney, from Ware?" replied a different voice.

"Who are those fellows, do you know?" asked Cleve of his men.

"That will be Christmas Owen, sir."

"Oh!" exclaimed Cleve. "And the other's the old gentleman from Malory?"

"Well, I think 'twill be him, sure."

In another minute the punt of the yacht was alongside the boat, with a message from Cleve, inviting the old gentleman on board, and offering to put him ashore wherever he liked best.

Shortly and grimly the courtesy was refused. The wrath of the old man, however, seemed to have subsided, and he gathered himself within the folds of his silence again. All had passed in a darkness deeper than that of Styx. A dense screen of cloud had entirely hid the moon; and though so near, Cleve could not see the old man of Malory, about whom he was curious, with a strange and even tender sort of curiosity, which, certainly, no particular graciousness on his part had invited. In a few minutes more the boat, with the aid of another spar, was on her course again, and the Wave more than a mile away on hers.

CHAPTER IX.

THE REVEREND ISAAC DIXIE.

At five o'clock next day Cleve Verney was again in Cardyllian.

Outside "The Chancery" stood a "fly," only just arrived. He had come only a minute or two before, and was waiting in the chamber which was still called the state room.

The room is long and paneled with oak, and the farther end is the fire-place. The ceiling above the cornice slopes at each side with the roof, so as to give it quite a chapel-like effect; a high carved oak mantel-piece, and a carved wainscotting embedding in its panels a symmetrical system of cupboards, closed the perspective, and, as Cleve entered at the door in the farther wall, gave effect to the solitary figure of the Reverend Isaac Dixie, who was standing with his back to the fire-place on the threadbare hearth rug, waiting, with an angelic smile, and beating time to a sacred melody, I am willing to believe, with his broad flat foot.

This clerical gentleman looked some six or seven-and-forty years old, rather tall than otherwise, broad, bland, and blue-chinned, smiling, gaitered, and single-breasted.

"Capital place to read out the Ten Commandments," exclaimed Cleve. "Glad to see you, old Dixie. It's a long time since we met."

The clergyman stepped forward, his chin a little advanced, his head a little on one side, smiling rosily with nearly closed eyes, and with a broad hand expanded to receive his former pupil's greeting.

"I've obeyed the summons, you see; punctually, I hope. Delighted, my dear, distinguished young pupil, to meet you, and congratulate you on your brilliant successes, delighted, my dear Cleve," murmured the divine, in a mild rapture of affection.

"That's not so neat as the old speech, Dixie; don't you remember?" said Cleve, nevertheless shaking his great soft red hand kindly enough. "What was it? Yes, you were to be my *tutamen*, and I your *dulce decus*. Wasn't that it?"

"Ha, yes, I may have said it; a little classic turn, you know; ha, ha! not altogether bad—not altogether? We have had many agreeable conversations—colloquies—you and I, Mr. Verney, together, in other and very happy days," said the clergyman, with a tender melancholy smile, while his folded hands faintly smoothed one another over as if in a dream of warm water and wash-balls.

"Do you remember the day I shied that awful ink bottle at your head? by Jove, it was as large as a tea-pot. If I had hit you that time, Dixie, I don't think we'd ever have found a mitre to fit your head."

"Arch, arch—ha, ha! dear me! yes—I had forgot that—yes, quite—you were always an arch boy, Cleve. Always arch, Mr. Verney."

"Very arch—yes, it was what old Toler called the office bottle; do you remember? it weighed three or four pounds. I think you were glad it was broken; you never got one like it into the room again. I say, if it had caught you on the head, what a deal of learning and other things the Church would have lost?"

Whenever it was Cleve's pleasure to banter, the Reverend Isaac Dixie took it in good part. It was his ancient habit, so on this occasion he simpered agreeably.

"It was in the little study at Malory. By-the-by, who are those people you've put into Malory?" continued Cleve.

"Ha—the—the people who occupy the *house?*" asked the clergyman, throwing out a question to gain time.

"Come—who are they?" said Cleve, a little briskly, throwing himself back in his seat at the same time, and looking in Dixie's face.

"Well, *I'm* the person responsible; in fact the lease is to me."

"Yes, I know that; go on."

"Well, I took it at the request of Miss Sheckleton, an elderly lady, whom—"

"Whom I don't care to hear about," interrupted Cleve. "There's an old gentleman—there's a young lady; who are *they?* I want their names."

The Reverend Isaac Dixie was evidently a little puzzled. He coughed, he looked down, he simpered, and shook his head.

"You don't want to tell me, Dixie."

"There is *nothing* I should not be most happy to tell my distinguished pupil. I've been always frank, quite frank with you, Mr. Verney. I've never had a secret."

Cleve laughed gently.

"You wrong me if you think I have," and the Rector of Clay dropped his eyes and colored a little, and coughed. "But this is not mine—and there really *is* a difficulty."

"Insuperable?"

"Well, really, I'm *afraid* that term expresses it but too truly," acquiesced the clergyman.

"What a bore!" exclaimed Cleve. "Shut the window, if it isn't too much trouble, like a dear old Dixie—a thousand thanks."

"I assure you I would not say it," resumed the Rector of Clay, "if it were not so—and I hope I'm in the habit of speaking truth—and this secret, if so trifling a thing may be seriously so termed, is not mine, and therefore not at my disposal."

"Something in that, old Dixie. Have a weed?" he added, tendering his cigars.

"Thanks, no; never smoke now," said he, closing his eyes, and lifting his hand as if in a benediction.

"Oh, to be sure, your Bishop—I forgot," said Cleve.

"Yes, a-ha; strong opinions; very able lecture—you have no doubt read it."

"With delight and terror. Death riding on a pipe clay colored horse. Sir Walter Raleigh, the man of sin, and the smoke of the bottomless pit, reeking of cheroots.[8] You used not to be such a fool, old Dixie. *I'm* your bishop now; I've said it, mind—and no one sees you," said Cleve, again offering his cigars.

"Well, well; any thing, any thing; thanks, just for *once, only* once;" and he selected one with a playful bashfulness.

"I'm your bishop—I don't forget. But you must wait till I'm—what d'ye call it?—*consecrated—there*, you need not laugh. Upon my honor, I'm serious; you shall have your choice; I swear you shall," said Cleve Verney, who stood very near the title and estates of Verney, with all their comfortable advowsons appendant.

The Reverend Isaac Dixie smiled affably and meekly with prospective gratitude, and said he softly—

"I'm only too happy to think my distinguished, and I may say, honored pupil, should deem me fit for a weighty charge in the Church; and I may say, although Clay has been considered a nice little thing, some years ago, yet, since the vicar's—I must say most unreasonable—claim has been allowed, it is really, I should be ashamed to say how trifling in emolument; we have all our crosses to bear, my dear pupil, friend, and I may say, patron—but it is good, nay, pleasant to me to have suffered disappointments, since in their midst comes no trifling balm in the confidence you are pleased to evidence in my humble fitness."

The clergyman was moved. A gleam of the red western sun through the window, across his broad, meek, and simpering countenance, helped the effect of his blinking eyes, and he hastily applied his handkerchief.

"Isaac, Isaac, you shan't come that over me. I *don't* think you fit—not a bit. I'm not an Aristides, only a bishop; and I don't pretend to more conscience than the rest." His eye rested on him with an unconscious disdain. "And for the life of me, I don't know why I intend doing any thing for you, except that I promised, and your name's lucky, I suppose; you used to keep telling me, don't you remember, that all the promises were to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? and you are Isaac, in the middle—*medio tutissimus*—and I think Isaac is the queerest mixture of Jew and boodle in the Old Testament, and—and—so on."

The sentence ended so because Cleve was now lighting his cigar. The clergyman smiled affably, and even waggishly, as one who can bear to be quizzed, and has a confidence in the affection of the joker; and Cleve smoked on serenely and silently for a little.

"And those are really my intentions respecting you," he resumed; "but you are to do as I bid you in the mean time, you know. I say, you mustn't snub your bishop; and, upon my honor, I'm perfectly serious, you shall never see my face again, nor hear of me more, if you don't,

this minute, tell me every thing you know about those people at Malory."

"Are you really *serious*, Mr. Verney?—*really* so?"

"Yes, quite so; and I can keep my word, as you know. Who are they?"

"You are placing me in the most awkward possible position; pray consider whether you really *do* make a point of it."

"I *do* make a point of it."

"I, of course, keep *nothing* from *you*, when you press it in that way; and besides, although it *is* awkward, it is in a measure *right*, inasmuch as you are connected with the property, I may say, and have a right to exact information, if you thus so insist upon it as a duty."

"Come, Dixie, who *are* they!" said Cleve, peremptorily.

"Well, he's in some difficulties just now, and it is really vital that his name should not be disclosed, so I entreat you won't mention it; and especially you won't mention me as having divulged it."

"Certainly; of course I don't want to set the beaks on your friend. I shan't mention his name, depend upon it, to mortal. I've just one reason for wishing to know, and I have brought you a journey, here and back, of a hundred and forty miles, precisely to answer me this question, and I *will* know."

"Well, Mr. Verney, my dear sir, I venture to wash my hands of consequences, and unfeignedly relying upon your promise, I tell you that the old gentleman, now residing in very strict seclusion at Malory, is Sir Booth—" he paused as if willing that Cleve should supply the surname, and so, perhaps, relieve him of a part of the disclosure.

"Sir Booth *what?*"

"Don't you know?"

"*No.* You can't mean Sir Booth Fanshawe."

"Sir Booth—Sir Booth Fanshawe; yes," said the clergyman, looking down bashfully, "I *do* mean Sir Booth Fanshawe."

"*By Jove!* And don't you think it was rather a liberty, bringing Sir Booth Fanshawe to occupy our house at Malory, after all that has passed?" demanded Cleve Verney, rather sternly.

"Well, *no*, it really did *not*—I'm grieved if I have erred in judgment; but it never *did* strike me in that light—never in that point of view; and Sir Booth doesn't know who it belongs to. It never struck me to tell him, and I don't think he has an idea."

"*I* don't care; but if my *uncle* hears, *he'll* not like it, I can tell you."

"I should not for any earthly consideration have made myself accessory to any thing that could possibly have given a moment's pain to my honored patron, the Honorable Kiffyn Fulke Verney, or to my honored pupil—"

"Why, yes, my uncle might do you a mischief; as for me, I don't care. Only I think it was rather cool, considering how savage he has always been—what a lot of money he has cost us—getting up contests and petitions, and villifying us wherever he could. He has left no stone unturned—but that's all over; and I think you've committed an indiscretion, because he hasn't a guinea left, and my sensible old grandmother will positively make you pay the rent, and that will be as unpleasant as sharing your tithes with the vicar."

"We are not all so wise as perhaps we should be in our generation," said the Reverend Isaac Dixie, with an apostolic simper that was plaintive and simple. To quiet the reader's uneasiness, however, I may mention that this good man had taken particular care to secure himself against a possible loss of a shilling in the matter. "And there are claims to which it is impossible to be deaf—there is a voice that seems to say, turn not thou away."

"*Do* stop that. You know very well that Booth Mildmay was once a man who could give you a lift; and you did not know, perhaps, that he is ruined."

"Pardon me; but too well. It is to protect him against immediate and melancholy consequences that I ventured, at some little risk, perhaps, to seek for him an asylum in the seclusion of Malory."

"Well, it wasn't all sentiment, my dear Dixie; there's a gold thread of a raveled tuft running through it somewhere; for whatever the romance of Christianity may say, the practice of the apostles is, very much, nothing for nothing; and if old Mildmay wasn't worth obliging, I dare say Hammerdon wrote or spoke to you. Come, your looks confess it."

"Lord Hammerdon, I have no hesitation in saying, did suggest—"

"There, that will do. Will you come over to Ware, and dine with me? I'm sure old Jones can give you a bed."

The Reverend Isaac Dixie, however, could not come. There was to be a religious meeting in the morning at Clay school-house; the bishop was to be there; and the rector was himself to move a resolution, and had not yet considered what he was to say.

So he stepped with a bland countenance and a deliberate stride into his fly again; and from its window smirked sadly, and waved his hand to the future patron of Fribbledon Cum Fleece, as he drove away; and the clergyman, who was not always quite celestial, and could, on safe occasions, be sharp and savage enough, exploded in a coarse soliloquy over the money, and the day and the ease he had sacrificed to the curiosity of that young man, who certainly *had* some as *odious* points as it had ever been his lot to meet with.

CHAPTER X.

READING AN EPITAPH.

Cleve Verney next afternoon was again on board his yacht. Wind and tide both favoring, the cutter was running under a press of canvas that brought her gunwale to the water's edge once

more for Penruthyn Priory. This time it was no mere aquatic whim; it was pursuit.

Searching the wooded seaboard of Malory with his glass, from the terrace of Ware, he had seen an open sail-boat waiting at the jetty. Down came a servant with cloaks and rugs. Cleve grew more and more interested as he adjusted the focus of his glass more exactly. On a sudden, from the little door in the boundary wall, emerged two ladies. There was no mistake; he could swear to them. They were the very same whom he had seen on Sunday in the Malory seat.

He watched till he saw the boat round the point, and then—"Yes," he thought, "they are certainly going to Penruthyn Priory."

And away went Cleve Verney in pursuit of the shadow which he secretly adored. From Ware to Penruthyn Priory is about six miles, and by the time the pursuing cutter was in motion the chase had made more than a mile of her course, and was within two of the landing point at the ruin.

Cleve saw the two ladies disembark. It was now plain that they had come either to visit the ruins, or for a walk in that wild and lonely park called the Warren. Cleve had brought his gun with him, only for an excuse.

Little more than five minutes after the arrival of the open boat, Cleve Verney set his foot upon the rude landing place, as old perhaps as the Priory itself; a clumsy little pier, constructed of great rocks, overgrown with sea-rack, over which slippery platform he strode with reckless haste, and up that steep and pretty little winding lane, the trees overhanging which look centuries old, stooping and mantled in ivy. They may have heard the tinkle of the bells of the prior's mule, as he ambled beneath their boughs, and the solemn swell of the monkish requiem from the melancholy little church-yard close by, under the old Priory windows. The thick stone wall that fences this ancient by-road is clasped together with ivy, and hoar with lichens, irregular, and broken as the battlements of a ruined tower. The approach, and the place itself, are in their picturesque sadness and solitude the very scene and setting of such a romance as Cleve Verney was pursuing.

Into the Warren, by the stile up this road's side, went Cleve, and climbed the gray rocky hillock that commands an extensive view of that wild park; but there they were not.

Well, they must, then, have pursued the path up to the Priory, and thither he followed.

Oh, ho! here they are; the young lady at a little distance looking up at the singular ruin; the old lady engaged in an active discussion with shrewish old Mrs. Hughes, who was very deaf and often a little tipsy, and who was now testily refusing the ladies admission within the iron gate which affords access to the ruins, of which she held the keys.

No situation could have been more fortunate for Cleve. The Warren and the Priory being his uncle's property, and the termagant Mrs. Hughes his officer, he walked up to the visitor, inquired very courteously the object of the application, and forthwith ordered the portress to open the gate and deliver up her keys; which she did, a good deal frightened at sight of so unexpected a *deus ex machinâ*.

An unmistakable gentleman, handsome, and plainly a sort of prince in this region, the old lady, although she did not know to whom she was obliged, was pleased at his offer to act as cicerone here, and accepted it graciously.

"My young friend will be very glad; she draws a little, and enjoys such sights immensely. Margaret!" she called. The young lady turned, and Cleve saw before him once more in flesh and blood that wonderful portrait of Beatrice Cenci, which had haunted him for three days.

The young lady heard what her companion had to say, and for a moment her large eyes rested on Cleve with a glance that seemed to him at once haughty, wild, and shy.

With one hand he held the gate open, and in the other his hat was raised respectfully, as side by side they walked into the open court. They each bowed as they passed, the elder lady very cheerily, the younger with a momentary glance of the same unconscious superiority, which wounded him more than his pride would have allowed; and a puzzled recollection flitted across his mind of having once heard, he could not remember when, that Booth Fanshawe had married a beautiful Italian, an heiress (a princess—wasn't she?)—at all events, a scion of one of their proud old houses, whose pedigrees run back into the Empire, and dwarf into parvenus the great personages of Burke's Peerage. What made it worse was, that there was no shyness, no awkwardness. She talked a good deal to her companion, and laughed slightly once or twice, in a very sweet tone. The old lady was affable and friendly; the young lady, on the contrary, so far from speaking to him, seemed hardly to give herself the trouble of listening to what he said. This kind of exclusion, to which the petted young man certainly was not accustomed, galled him extremely, the more so that she looked, he thought, more beautiful than ever, and that her voice, and pretty slightly foreign accent, added another charm to the spell.

He made them a graceful little lecture on the building, as they stood in the court. If she had any cleverness, she would see with what a playful and rapid grace he could convey real information. The young lady looked from building to building as he described them, but with no more interest in the speaker, it seemed to him, than if the bellman of Cardyllian had been reading it from a handbill. He had never done any thing so well in the House of Commons, and here it was accepted as a piece of commonplace. The worst of it was that there was no finesse in all this. It was in perfect good faith that this beautiful young lady was treating him like a footman.

Cleve was intensely piqued. Had she been less lovely, his passion might have recoiled into disgust; as it was, with a sort of vindictive

adoration, he vowed that he would yet compel her to hang upon his words as angels' music, to think of him, to watch for him, to love him with all that wild and fiery soul which an intuition assured him was hers.

So with this fierce resolve at his heart, he talked very agreeably with the accessible old lady, seeming, in a spirit, I dare say, altogether retaliatory, to overlook the young lady's presence a good deal.

"I've got the key of the church, also; you'll allow me, I hope, to show it to you. It is really very curious—a much older style than the rest of the building—and there are some curious monuments and epitaphs."

The old lady would be charmed, of course, and her young companion, to whom she turned, would like it also. So Cleve, acting as porter, opened the ponderous door, and the party entered this dim and solemn Saxon chapel, and the young lady paused and looked round her, struck, as it seemed, with a sense of something new and very interesting.

"How strange! How rude it is, and irregular; not large, and yet how imposing!" murmured the girl, as she looked round with a momentary awe and delight. It was the first remark she had made, which it was possible for Cleve Verney to answer.

"That's so true! considering how small it is, it does inspire a wonderful awe," said he, catching at the opportunity. "It's very dark, to be sure, and that goes a long way; but its style is so rough and Cyclopean, that it overcomes one with a feeling of immense antiquity; and antiquity is always solemn; a gift from people so remote and mysterious as those who built this chapel is affecting."

At this point Cleve Verney paused; either his ideas failed him, or he felt that they were leading him into an oration. But he saw that the young lady looked at him, as he spoke, with some interest, and he felt more elated than he had done for many a day.

"Is that a broken pillar?" asked Miss Sheckleton—as I shall for the future call the elder lady.

"That's the font—very ancient—there's some odd carving about it, which has puzzled our antiquaries," said Cleve, leading the way to it.

The young lady had not followed. His exposition was to Miss Sheckleton, whose inquisitiveness protracted it. It was dry work for Cleve. The young lady had seated herself in a sort of oak stall, and was looking up at the groining of the round ribbed arches, at some distance. The effect was singular. She was placed in the deep *chiāro-oscūro*, a strong gleam of light entering through a circular aperture in the side wall illuminated her head and face with a vivid and isolated effect; her rich chestnut hair was now disclosed, her bonnet having fallen back, as she gazed upward, and the beautiful oval face was disclosed in the surrounding shadow with the sudden brilliancy and isolation of a picture in a phantasmagoria.

Verney's eyes were not upon the font on which he was lecturing, his thoughts were wandering too, and Miss Sheckleton observed perhaps some odd vagueness and iteration in his remarks; but the young lady changed her position, and was now examining another part of the church.

Cleve either felt or fancied, seeing, as the Italians say, with the tail of his eye, that she was now, for a moment, looking at him, believing herself unseen. If this were so, was it not the beginning of a triumph? It made him strangely happy.

If Cleve had seen those sights in town, I can't say whether their effect would have been at all similar; but beautiful scenery, like music, predisposes to emotion. Its contemplation is the unconscious abandonment of the mind to sentiment, and once excite tenderness and melancholy, and the transition to love is easy upon small provocations. In the country our visions flit more palpably before us; there is nothing there, as amid the clatter and vulgarities of the town, to break our dreams. The beautiful rural stillness is monotony itself, and monotony is the spell and the condition of all mesmeric impressions. Hence young men, in part, run the dangers of those enchanted castles called country houses, in which you lose your heads and hearts, whither you arrive jubilant and free, and whence you are led by delicate hands, with a silken halter round your necks, with a gay gold ring in your obedient noses, and a tiny finger crooked therein, and with a broad parchment pinned upon your patient shoulders, proclaiming to the admiring world that your estates have gone the way of your liberties, and that you and they are settled for life.

"Now *this*," said he, pointing to a block of carved stone placed in the aisle, "is the monument of old Martha Nokes; pray ask your young lady to come for one moment; it's worth reading."

"*Margaret!*" called the elder visitor, in the subdued tone suited to the sacred place. "Come, darling, and see this."

"This inscription is worth reading, and I can tell you about the old woman, for I remember her quite well. I was eight years old when she died. Old Martha Nokes; she died in her hundred and twentieth year."

The young lady stood by and listened and read. The epitaph related her length of service, her fidelity, and other virtues, and that "this stone was placed here in testimony of the sincere and merited esteem, respect, and affection cherished for the deceased, by Eleanor, Viscountess (Dowager) Verney, of Malory."

"There's some beautiful embroidery on satin, worked by her more than a hundred and fifteen years ago, at Ware," said Cleve Verney. "They say such work can't be had now. '*In the course of her long pilgrimage*,' you see by the epitaph, '*she had no less than twenty-three substantial offers of marriage, all which she declined, preferring her single state to the many cares and trials of wedded life, and willing also to remain*

to the end of her days in the service of the family of Verney (to whom she was justly grateful), and in which she had commenced her active and useful, though humble life, in the reign of King George the First.' So you see she spent all her life with us; and I'll tell our people, if you should happen to pass near Ware—it's not an hour's sail across—and would care to see it, to show you her embroidery, and her portrait; and if there's any thing else you think worth looking at; there are some pictures and bronzes; they'll be quite at your service; my uncle is hardly ever at Ware; and I only run down for a little boating and shooting, now and then."

"Thank you," said the old lady, and utter silence followed. Her young companion glanced at her for a moment, and saw her look blank and even confounded. She averted her gaze, and something, I suppose, struck her as comical, for, with a sudden little silvery laugh, she said—

"What a charming, funny old woman she must have been!"

And with this excuse she laughed more—and again, after a little interval. Nothing more contagious than this kind of laughter, especially when one has an inkling of the cause. Cleve looked at the font, and lowered his large eyes to the epitaph of the Virgin Martha Nokes, and bit his lips, but he *did* laugh a little in spite of himself, for there was something nearly irresistible in pleasant Miss Sheckleton's look of vacant consternation.

CHAPTER XI.

FAREWELL.

The young lady was instantly grave, with even a little fiery gleam of anger in her eyes, he thought. He could not help raising his also, now quite gravely and even respectfully, looking on her.

"I think you know who we are," she said a little suddenly and haughtily.

"You are at present living at Malory, I believe," said he, with a respectful evasion.

"Yes; but I mean *who* we are," said Margaret, very pale, very proud, and with her splendid hazel eyes fixed full upon him with the irresistible inspiration of truth.

"I *have* heard—in part accidentally—something."

"Yes," said the girl, you are Mr. Cleve Verney, and my name is Fanshawe; and my father, Sir Booth Fanshawe, is at present living at Malory."

"My dear! are you *mad?*" gasped Miss Sheckleton aghast.

"Yes. We are the people who live at Malory, and my father had hoped that he might have escaped there the observation of all but the very few persons who take a friendly interest in him. The place was looked out and taken for us by a person of whom we knew nothing—a clergyman, I believe. I have now, for the first time, learned from that grave-stone to whom the place belongs. We know nothing of the townspeople or of neighbors. We have lived to ourselves; and if he had known that Malory belonged to the Verneys, I hope you believe he would neither have been mad or mean enough to come here, to live in the house of his enemies."

"Oh, Margaret! Margaret! you have ruined your father," said poor Miss Sheckleton, pale as a ghost, and with her trembling fingers in the air.

"I assure you, Miss Fanshawe," said Cleve, "you do me a cruel injustice when you class me with Sir Booth Fanshawe's *enemies*. There have been those miserable money matters, in which *I* never had, nor *could* have had, any influence whatsoever. And there has been political hostility, in which I have been the victim rather than the aggressor. Of course, I've had to fight my battles as best I could; but I've never done any thing unfair or unmanly. You plainly think me a personal enemy of Sir Booth's. It pains me that you do so. In the sense in which you seem to think it, I never was, nor in any sense could I continue to be so, in his present—his present—"

The young man hesitated for a word or a paraphrase to convey a painful meaning without offense.

"His present ruin, and his approaching exile," said the young lady.

"I'm sure, sir, what you say is exactly so," pleaded poor Miss Sheckleton, nervously. "It was, as you say, all about elections, and that kind of thing, which, with him, you know, never can be again. So, I'm sure, the feeling is all over. *Isn't* it, Mr. Verney?"

"I don't think it matters much," said the young lady, in the same tone of haughty defiance. "*I* don't—girls, I believe, never *do* understand business and politics. All I know is this—that my father has been ruined. My father has been ruined, and that, I hope, will satisfy his enemies. I know *he* thinks, and *other* people think—people in no way mixed up in his affairs—people who are *impartial*—that it was the cruelty and oppression of Mr. Kiffyn Verney—your uncle, I think you say—that drove him to ruin. Well, you know now that my father is at Malory."

"He does, darling. We may be overheard," said Miss Sheckleton in an imploring tremor.

But the young lady continued in the same clear tone—

"I can't say what is considered fair and manly, as you say, in political enmity; but, seeing what it has done, I have no reason to believe it very scrupulous or very merciful; therefore, with some diffidence, I ask only whether you can promise that he shall not be molested for a few days, until some other refuge shall have been provided for us? And when we shall have left England forever, you will have no more to fear from my father, and can afford, I think, to forget his name."

There was a kind of contradiction here, or rather one of those discords which our sense of

harmony requires, and mysteriously delights in —for while her language was toned with something of the anguish of pleading, her mien and look were those of a person dictating terms to the vanquished. Had she but known all, they might have been inspired by the workings of his heart. Her color had returned more brilliantly, her large eyes gleamed, and her beautiful eyebrow wore that *anguine* curve which is the only approach to a scowl which painters accord to angels. Thus, though her tones were pathetic, she stood like a beautiful image of Victory.

In the silence that followed, Cleve stood before her for a moment confounded. Too many feelings were on a sudden set in motion by this girl's harangue, to find a distinct resultant in words. His pride was stung — something of anger was stirred within him; his finer sympathies, too, were moved, and a deeper feeling still.

"I'm afraid you think me a very mean person, indeed," said Cleve. "To no one, not to my uncle, not to any living person, will I so much as hint that I know any thing of Sir Booth Fanshawe's present place of abode. I don't think that we men are ever quite understood by *you*. I hope *that* is it. I *hope* it is not that you entertain a particularly ill opinion of *me*. I haven't deserved it, you'll find I *never* shall. I hope you will employ me. I hope, Miss Sheckleton, *you* will employ me, wherever, in *any* way, you think I can be of use. Your having, although I know it is perfectly accidental, come to Malory, places me under a kind of obligation, I wish you would allow me to think so, of hospitality; there is no room for generosity here; it would be a misplaced phrase; but I wish, *very* much, that you would put my good will to the proof, and rely upon my fidelity; only give me a trial."

I believe that every one who is speaking all in earnest, and, for the moment, quite from a good impulse, looks more beautiful in that momentary glow of paradise; and certainly no handsomer young fellow, to my mind, could have been imagined than Cleve Verney, as he stood uncovered before the beautiful stranger, and pleaded for her good opinion.

The young lady was silent, and looked at Miss Sheckleton, as if deputing her to answer, and then looked away.

"You're very kind. I *know* you won't deceive us, Mr. Verney," said Miss Sheckleton, with an imploring look, and laying her hand unconsciously upon his arm. "I am sure you won't disappoint us; but it is a great difficulty; you've no idea; for Sir Booth feels very strongly, and in fact we don't mention the name of your family to him; and I'm sure—indeed I *know*—if he were aware that Malory was Verney property, he would never have come here, and if I were to tell him, he would leave it at once. It was a very old friend, Lord Hammerdon, who employed a clergyman, a Mr. Dixie, I think, a friend of his, to look out a suitable place in a very quiet neighborhood; and so, without making—without, indeed, the *power* of making inquiry, we came down here, and have just made the discovery—two discoveries, indeed—for not only does the place belong to your family, but you, Mr. Verney, are aware that Sir Booth is here."

"Sir Booth will do me the justice to trust my word. I assure you—I swear to you—no mortal shall learn the secret of his residence from me. I hope Miss Fanshawe believes me. I'm sure *you* do, Miss Sheckleton," said Cleve.

"We are *both very* much obliged," said the old lady.

The girl's eyes were lowered. Cleve thought she made just a perceptible inclination to intimate her acquiescence. It was clear, however, that her fears were satisfied. She raised her eyes, and they rested on him for a moment with a grave and even melancholy gaze, in which—was there confidence? That momentary, almost unconscious glance was averted, but Cleve felt unaccountably happy and even proud.

"It is then understood," said he, "that I am not to charge myself with having caused, however unintentionally, any disturbance or embarrassment of your plans. Do you think — it would give me so much pleasure—that I might venture to call upon Sir Booth Fanshawe, to make him in person that offer of my humble services, in any way in which he might please to employ me, which I have already tendered to you?"

He saw the young lady turn an alarmed glance upon her companion, and press her hand slightly on her arm, and the old lady said quickly—

"Not for the world! Nothing would vex him more. That is, I mean, it is better he should not think that he has been recognized; he is impetuous, and, as you *must* know, a little fiery, and just now is suffering, and, in fact, I should not venture, although, I need not say, I quite appreciate the feeling, and thank you very much."

A silence followed this little speech. The subject that had engrossed and excited the little party was for the present exhausted, and no one was ready at the moment to start another.

"We have detained you here most unreasonably, Mr. Verney, I'm afraid," said Miss Sheckleton, glancing toward the door. "The evenings have grown so short, and our boatmen said we should be longer returning; and I think we should have been on our way home before now."

"I only wish you would allow me to set you down at Malory in my boat, but I know that would not do, so you must allow me to see you on board your own."

More time had passed, a great deal, during this odd scene, than it takes to read my note of it. When they stepped forth from the door of the tenebrous little church, the mellow light of sunset was streaming along the broken pavement and grass, and glowing on the gray walls and ivy of the old building.

Margaret Fanshawe was very silent all the way down to the little stone pier, at which the boat was moored. But the old lady had quite recovered her garrulous good spirits and energy.

There was something likeable and even winning in Miss Anne Sheckleton, sixty years though she looked. She did not hide her gray locks; they were parted smoothly over her intelligent forehead, and in her clear, pleasant face you could see at times a little gleam of waggery, and sometimes the tenderness of sentiment. So that there remained with her that inextinguishable youth of spirit that attracts to the last.

Cleve was not one of those fellows who don't understand even so much self-denial as is necessary to commend them to old ladies on occasion. He was wiser. He walked beside her slight figure and light firm step, talking agreeably, with now and then a stolen glance at the silent girl. Miss Sheckleton was an old woman such as I love. Such as remains young at three score, and is active still with youthful interests, and a vein of benevolent romance.

And now they stood at the gunwale of the boat, and Miss Sheckleton, smiling a little anxiously, gave him her hand at parting.

"May I?" said he, in a tone respectful and even melancholy, at the same time extending his hand with hesitation toward the young lady beside him.

There was a little motion in her hand, as if she would have shut or withdrawn it, but she looked at him with grave eyes; was there doubt in them, or was there confidence? and gave him her hand too, with a sad look. There was one strong violent throb at his heart as he pressed that slender gauge; and then it seemed to stand still for a moment; and he heard the evening breeze among the leaves, like a sigh along the shore. Was it an omen?

The next moment he was standing alone, with his hat in his hand, smiling and waving an adieu over the glittering waves to the receding boat.

CHAPTER XII.

IN WHICH CLEVE VERNEY WAYLAYS AN OLD LADY.

Cleve visited the old Priory next day, but there had been no one to look at it since. He took a walk in the Warren and killed some innocent rabbits, and returned an hour later. Still no one. He loitered about the ruins for some time longer, but nothing came of it. The next day in like manner he again inspected the Priory, to the wonderment of Mrs. Hughes, who kept the keys, and his yacht was seen till sunset hovering about Penruthyn. He drove into the town also now and then, and looked in on the shopkeepers, and was friendly as usual; and on these occasions always took a ramble either over the hill or by the old Malory road, in the direction of the dower house.

But the Malory people seemed to have grown still more cautious and reserved since the adventure of Penruthyn Priory. Sunday came, and Miss Anne Sheckleton sat alone in the Malory pew.

Cleve, who had been early in his place, saw the old lady enter alone and the door shut, and experienced a pang of disappointment—more than disappointment, it amounted to pain.

If in the dim light of the Malory seat he had seen, once more, the Guido that haunted him, he could with pleasure have sat out three services, with three of the longest of good Mr. Splayfoot's long sermons. But as it was, it dragged wofully—it made next to no way; the shrilly school-children and the deep-toned Mr. Bray sang more verses than ever to the solemn drone of the organ, and old Splayfoot preached as though he'd preach his last. Even Cleve's watch, which he peeped at with a frequency he grew ashamed of, lingered and loitered over the minutes cruelly.

The service would not have seemed so nearly interminable if Cleve had not resolved to waylay and accost the lady at the other side—even at the risk of being snubbed for his pains—and to him, full of this resolve, the interval was miserable.

When the people stood up after the blessing Cleve Verney had vanished. From the churchyard he had made his exit by the posterns or from which he and his enamored friend Sexby had descended a week before to the narrow wall under the town wall, leading to Malory.

Down this he walked listlessly till he reached that lonely part of the road which is overarched by trees; and here, looking over the sloping fields toward the sea, as if at the distant mountains, he did actually waylay Miss Sheckleton.

The old lady seemed a little flurried and shy, and would, he fancied, have gladly been rid of him. But that did not weigh much with Cleve, who, smiling and respectful, walked by her side after he had made his polite salutation. A few sentences having been first spoken about indifferent things, Cleve said—

"I've been to the old Priory twice since I met you there."

"Oh!" said Miss Anne Sheckleton, looking uneasily toward Malory. He thought she was afraid that Sir Booth's eye might chance to see observing them.

Cleve did not care. He rather enjoyed her alarm, and the chance of bringing matters to a crisis. *She* had not considered *him* much in the increased jealousy with which she had cloistered up her beautiful recluse ever since that day which burned in his memory and cast a train of light along the darkness of the interval. Cleve would have been glad that the old man had discovered and attacked him. He thought he could have softened and even made him his friend.

"Do you never purpose visiting the ruins again?" asked Cleve. "I had hoped it interested you and Miss Fanshawe too much to be dropped on so slight an acquaintance."

"I don't know. Our little expeditions have been very few and very uncertain," hesitated Miss Sheckleton.

"Pray, don't treat me *quite* as a stranger," said Cleve in a low and earnest tone; "what I said the other day was not, I assure you, spoken

upon a mere impulse. I hope, I am sure, that Miss Fanshawe gives me credit at least for sincerity."

He paused.

"Oh! certainly, Mr. Verney, we do."

"And I so wish you would tell her that I have been ever since thinking how I can be of any real use—ever so little—if only to prove my anxiety to make her trust me even a little."

"I think, Mr. Verney, it is quite enough if we don't *dis*trust you; and I can assure you we do not," said the spinster.

"My uncle, though not the sort of man you may have been led to suppose him — not at all an unkind man—is, I must allow, a little odd and difficult sometimes—you see I'm not speaking to you as a stranger—and he won't do things in a moment; still if I knew exactly what Sir Booth expected from him—if you think I might venture to ask an interview—"

"Quite *impossible!* You must not *think* of it," exclaimed the lady with a look almost of terror, "just now, while all is so fresh, and feelings so excited, he's in no mood to be reasonable, and no good *could* come of it."

"Well, *you* know best, of course. But I expect to be called away, my stay at Ware can't be much longer. My uncle writes as if he wants me; and I wish so much, short as it is, that I could improve it to any useful purpose. I can't tell you how very much I pity Miss Fanshawe, immured in that gloomiest of all gloomy places. Such an unnatural and terrifying seclusion for one so very young."

"It is certainly very triste," said Miss Sheckleton.

"She draws, you told me, and likes the garden, and reads; you must allow me to lend you some books, won't you? *you* I say; and *you* can lend them to her," he added, seeing a hesitation, "and you need take no trouble about returning them. Just lock them up anywhere in the house when you've done with them, and I'll get them when you leave Malory, which I hope won't be for a long time, unless it be for a very much pleasanter residence."

Here came a pause; the eyes of the two pedestrians were directed toward Malory as they descended the road, but no sign of life was visible in that quarter.

"You got home very well that day from the Priory; I watched you all the way," said he at last.

"Oh! yes; the distance is nothing."

Another little pause followed.

"*You're* not afraid, Miss Sheckleton, of venturing outside the walls. I fear, however, I've a great deal to answer for in having alarmed Miss Fanshawe, though quite unintentionally, for the safety of Sir Booth's incognito. The secret is known to *no* one but to *me* and the persons originally entrusted with it; I *swear* to you it is *so*. There's no reason on earth for your immuring yourselves as you do within those melancholy precincts; it excites curiosity, on the contrary, and people begin to pry and ask questions; and I trust you believe that I would not trifle or mislead you upon such a subject.

"You are very good," answered Miss Sheckleton, looking down. "Yes, we *are* obliged to be very careful; but it is hardly worth breaking a rule; we may possibly be here for so very short a time, you know. And about the books—"

"Oh! about the books I'll hear nothing; there are books coming for me to Ware, and I shan't be there to receive them. And I shall be, I assure you, ever so much obliged if you'll only just give them house-room—they'll be so much safer—at Malory; and you won't deny me the pleasure of thinking that you and Miss Fanshawe will look over them."

He fancied she did not like this; and thought she seemed embarrassed to find an evasion; but before she could speak he continued—"And how is the little squirrel I saw in the boat the other day; Miss Fanshawe's, I suppose? Such a pretty little thing!"

"Oh! poor little Whisk. There has been a tragedy: some horrid thing, a wild cat or an owl, killed him the other night, and mangled him so; poor, little, dear thing! you must not ask."

"Oh dear! I'm *so* sorry; and Miss Fanshawe can so ill spare a companion just now."

"Yes, it has been a great blow; and—and I think, Mr. Verney, I should prefer bidding you good-bye *here*," said Miss Sheckleton, stopping resolutely, and holding out her fingers for him to take; for she was on odd terms of suspicion and confidence — something more than mere chance acquaintance.

He looked toward the wood of Malory—now overlooking them, almost in the foreground; and, I think, if he had seen Miss Fanshawe under its shadows, nothing would have prevented his going right on—perhaps very rashly —upon the chance of even a word from her. But the groves were empty; neither "Earl King" nor his daughter were waiting for them. So, for simply nothing, it would not do to vex the old lady, with whom, for many reasons, it was desirable that he should continue upon good terms, and with real regret he did *there*, as she desired, take his leave, and slowly walk back to Cardyllian, now and then stealing a glance over the old side-walk of the steep road, thinking that just possibly his Guido might appear in the shadow to greet the old lady at the gate. But nothing appeared—she went in, and the darkness received her.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BOY WITH THE CAGE.

At Ware a letter awaited Cleve from his uncle, the Hon. Kiffyn Fulke Verney. He read it after dinner, with his back to the fire, by a candle placed on the corner of the chimney-piece. He never was in any great haste to open his uncle's letters, except when he expected a remittance. I must allow they were not enter-

taining, and did not usually throw much light upon any thing. But it was not safe to omit a single line, for his uncle knew them by rote, and in their after meetings asked him questions upon some passages, and referred pointedly to others. Uncle Kiffyn was in fact thin-skinned in his vanities, and was a person with whom it would have been highly inconvenient to have been on any but the very best terms.

Cleve had, therefore, to read these closely written dispatches with more attention than even his friend Dixie read his Bible. They were a sore trouble, for their length was at times incredible.

As he read these letters, moans and even execrations escaped him, such as poets describe as issuing from the abode of torment—"Good heavens! mightn't he have said that in five words?" Then a "Pish!"—"Always grumbling about that executorship. Why did he take it? I do believe he likes it."

And then Cleve read—"I see no reason why, with respect to you, I may not exercise—as between ourselves, at least—an absolute unreserve with relation to a fact of which, through a channel not necessary to particularize, I have just received an authentic assurance, to the effect, namely, that Sir Booth Fanshawe—whose ruin has been brought about partly by his virtual insanity in opposing me with an insensate pertinacity and an intense ill-feeling, on which I offer no observation, but involving an expense to which his impaired means were obviously inadequate, and partly by early follies, profligacies, and vices—is now living concealed in the Rue de —, in Paris." Cleve laughed. "He is a person to whom neither courtesy nor forbearance, as it appears to me, can reasonably be held to be in any respect due from me. There has been a recent order—charging him, as you may have seen by the public papers, with £2,317 costs in the collateral suit connected with the trust cause, in which I was, though I by no means sought the position, the plaintiff—to foreclose the mortgage over Wycroft. I have written to apprise Milbanke of the fact, that he may take such steps as the nature of the case may suggest." "Well for Sir Booth he does not know he's so near! What's this? A postscript! well"—"P.S.—I have opened my letter to introduce this postscript, in consequence of a letter which has just reached me in course of post from Mr. Jos. Larkin, a solicitor, who was introduced to my notice about two years since by a member of the Brandon family, and who is unquestionably a man of some ability in his position in life. His letter is accompanied by a note from Messrs. Nun & Samuels, and the two documents involve considerations so sudden, complicated and momentous, that I must defer opening them, and request your presence at Verney House on the 15th proximo, when I mean to visit town for the purpose of arriving at a distinct solution of the several reports thus submitted upon a subject intimately connected with my private feelings, and with the most momentous interests of my house."

So abruptly ended the postscript, and for a moment Cleve was seriously alarmed. Could those meddling fellows who had agents everywhere have fished up some bit of Cardyllian gossip about his Malory romance?

He knew very well what the Hon. Kiffyn Fulke Verney would think of that. His uncle could make or mar him. He knew that he had dangerous qualities, being a narrow man, with obstinate resentments. He was stunned for a moment; but then he reflected that all the romance in which he was living had been purely psychologic and internal, and that there was no overt act to support the case which he might not confess and laugh at.

"On the 15th proximo"—Very well; on the 15th he would be in town, and hear his uncle upon this subject involving his "private feelings" and "the most momentous interests of his house." Could it be that his outcast uncle, who had been dragging out a villainous existence in Turkey, under the hospitable protection of the Porte—who was said to have killed the captain of a French man-of-war in that contemplative retreat, and whom he was wont respectfully to call "the Old Man of the Mountains," was dead at last?

The postscript would bear this interpretation; and a pompous liking for mystery, which was one of his uncle's small weaknesses, would account for his withholding the precise information, and nursing and making much of his secret, and delivering it at last, like a Cabinet manifesto or a Sessional address.

"If the Old Man of the Mountains be really out of the way, it's an important event for us."

And a dark smile lighted the young man's face as he thought of the long train of splendid consequences that would awake at his death-bed and begin to march before his funeral.

Ambition, they say, is the giant passion. But giants are placable and sleep at times. The spirit of emulation—the lust of distinction—*hominum volitare per ora—digito monstrarier*—in a wider and still widening sphere—until all the world knows something about you—and so on and on—the same selfish aspiration, and at best the same barren progress, till at last it has arrived, you are a thoroughly advertised and conspicuous mediocrity, still wishing, and often tired, in the midst of drudgery and importance and *éclat*, and then—on a sudden, the other thing comes—the first of the days of darkness which are many.

> Thy house shall be of clay,
> A clot under thy head;
> Until the latter day
> The grave shall be thy bed.

But nature has her flowers and her fruits, as well as those coarse grains and vegetables on which overgrown reputations are stall-fed. The Commons lobby, the division list, the bureau, Hansard, the newspapers, the dreary bombast of the Right Hon. Marcus Tullius Countinghouse, which fashion lauds, and no mortal ever reads; the ironies of Mr. Swelter, so far behind the

satire of the *Times*; the jokes, so much below *Punch*, of Mr. Rasp,—enjoy these illusions while you may, now, in the days of thy youth, before your time comes, and care catches you, and you are drawn in and ground under the great old machine which has been thundering round and round, and bruising its proper grist, ever since Adam and Eve walked out of Eden.

But besides all this delicious rape-cake and mangold of politics, Cleve Verney had his transient perceptions of the flowers and fruits, as we say, that spring elsewhere. There are fancy, the regrets, the yearnings—something recluse in the human soul, which will have its day, a day, though brief it may be, of entire domination.

Now it came to pass, among the trees of lonely Malory, at eventide, when the golden air was flooded with the vesper songs of small birds, and the long gray shadows were stretching into distance, that a little brown Welsh boy, with dark lively eyes, and a wire cage in his hand, suddenly stood before Miss Margaret Fanshawe, who awaking from a reverie, with a startled look—for intruders were there unknown—fixed her great eyes upon him.

"You've climbed the wall, little gipsy," said the beautiful lady, with a shake of her head and a little frown, raising her finger threateningly. "What! You say nothing? This is a lonely place don't you know; there are ghosts here and fairies, in Malory? And I'm one of them perhaps," she continued, softening a little, for he looked at her with round eyes of wonder and awe.

"And what do you want here? and what have you got in that cage? Let me see it."

Breaking through an accidental cleft among the old trees, one sunset ray streamed on the face of this little Welsh Murillo; and now through the wires of the cage, gilding them pleasantly as he raised it in his hand, and showed two little squirrels hopping merrily within.

"Squirrels! How curious! My poor little Whisk, there's none like you, funny little Whisk, kind little Whisk, true little thing; you loved your mistress, and no one else, no one else. He's buried there, under that large rose-bush; I won't cry for you, little Whisk, any more; I said I wouldn't."

She looked wistfully toward the rose-bush, and the little head-stone she had girlishly placed at her favorite's grave, and the little boy saw two great crystal tears glittering in her large eyes as she gazed; and she turned and walked a hasty step or two toward it. I don't know whether they fell or were dried, but when she came back she looked as at first.

"I'll buy one of these little things, they *are* very pretty, and I'll call it Frisk; and I'll please myself by thinking it's little Whisk's brother; it *may* be, you know," she said, unconsciously taking the little boy into the childish confidence. "What would you sell one of those little things for? perhaps you would not like to part with it, but I'll make it very happy, I shall be very kind to it."

She paused, but the little fellow only looked still silently and earnestly in her face.

"Is he deaf or dumb, or a sprite—who are you?" said the girl, looking at him curiously.

A short sentence in Welsh, prettiest of all pretty tongues, with its pleasant accent, was the reply.

"Then all my fine sentences have been thrown away, and not one word has he understood!"

Looking at his impenetrable face, and thus speaking, she smiled; and in that sudden and beautiful radiance he smiled merrily also.

All this happened under the trees close by the old Refectory wall, at the angle of which is a small door admitting into the stable-yard. Opening this, she called "Thomas Jones!" and the Cardyllian "helper," so called, answered the invocation quickly.

"Make out from that little boy what he is willing to take for one of his squirrels," said she, and listened in suspense while the brief dialogue in Welsh proceeded.

"He says, my lady, he does not know, but will go home and ask; and if you give him a shilling for earnest, he'll leave the cage here. So you may look at them for some time, my lady—yes, sure, and see which you would find the best of the two."

"Oh, that's charming!" said she, nodding and smiling her thanks to the urchin, who received the shilling and surrendered the cage, which she set down upon the grass in triumph; and seating herself upon the turf before them, began to talk to the imprisoned squirrels with the irrepressible delight with which any companionable creature is welcomed by the young in the monotony and sadness of solitude.

The sun went down, and the moon rose over Malory, but the little brown boy returned not. Perhaps his home was distant. But the next morning did not bring him back, nor the day, nor the evening; and, in fact, she saw his face no more.

"Poor little deserted squirrels!—two little foundlings!—what am I to think? Tell me, Cousin Anne, was that little boy what he seemed, or an imp that haunts these woods, and wants to entangle me by a bargain uncompleted; or a compassionate spirit that came thus disguised to supply the loss of poor little Whisk; and how and when do you think he will appear again?"

She was lighting her bedroom candle in the faded old drawing-room of Malory, as, being about to part for the night, she thus addressed her gray Cousin Anne. That old spinster yawned at her leisure, and then said—

"He'll *never* appear again, dear."

"I should really say, to judge by that speech, that you knew something about him," said Margaret Fanshawe, replacing her candle on the table as she looked curiously in her face.

The old lady smiled mysteriously.

"What is it?" said the girl; "you must tell

me—you *shall* tell me. Come, Cousin Anne, I don't go to bed to-night till you tell me all you know."

The young lady had a will of her own, and sat down, it might be for the night, in her chair again.

"As to knowing, my dear, I really *know nothing;* but I have my *suspicions.*"

"H-m!" said Margaret, for a moment dropping her eyes to the table, so that only their long silken fringes were visible. Then she raised them once more gravely to her kinswoman's face. "Yes, I *will* know *what* you suspect."

"Well, I think that handsome young man, Mr. Cleve Verney, is at the bottom of the mystery," said Miss Chatterton, with the same smile.

Again the young lady dropped her eyes gravely, and was for a moment silent. Was she pleased or *dis*pleased? Proud and sad her face looked.

"There's no one here to tell him that I lost my poor little squirrel. It's quite impossible—the most unlikely idea imaginable."

"*I* told him on Sunday," said Miss Sheckleton, smiling.

"He had no business to talk about me."

"Why, dear, unless he was a positive brute, he could not avoid asking for you; so I told him you were *desolé* about your bereavement—your poor little Whisk, and he seemed so sorry and kind; and I'm perfectly certain he got these little animals to supply its place."

"And so has tricked me into taking a present?" said the young lady, a little fiercely—"he would not have taken that liberty—"

"*Liberty*, my dear?"

"Yes, *liberty;* if he did not think that we were fallen, ruined people—"

"Now, my dear child, your father's *not* ruined, I maintain it; there will be more left, I'm very certain, than he supposes; and I could have almost beaten you the other day for using that expression in speaking to Mr. Verney; but you *are* so *impetuous*—and then, could any one have done a more thoughtful or a kinder thing, and in a more perfectly delicate way? He *hasn't* made you a present; he has only contrived that a purchase should be thrown in your way, which of all others was exactly what you most wished; he has not appeared, and never *will* appear in it; and I know, for my part, I am very much obliged to him—*if* he has done it—and I think he admires you too much to run a risk of offending you."

"What?"

"I do—I think he admires you."

The girl stood up again, and took her candle, but paused for a moment by the table, looking thoughtfully. Was she paler than usual? or was it only that the light of the candle in her hand was thrown upward on her features? Then she said in a spoken meditation—

"There are dreams that have in them, I think, the germs of insanity; and the sooner we dissipate them, don't you think, the better and the wiser?"

She smiled, nodded, and went away.

Whose dreams did she mean? Cleve Verney's, Miss Sheckleton's, or—could it be, her own?

CHAPTER XIV.

NEWS ABOUT THE HON. ARTHUR VERNEY.

NEXT morning Margaret Fanshawe was unusually silent at breakfast, except to her new friends the squirrels, whose cage she placed on a little table close by, and who had already begun to attach themselves to her. To them she talked, as she gave them their nuts, a great deal of that silvery nonsense which is pleasant to hear as any other pleasant sound in nature. But good old Miss Sheckleton thought her out of spirits.

"She's vexing herself about my conjectures," thought the old lady. "I am sorry I said a word about it. I believe *I* was a fool, but she's a greater one. She's young, however, and has that excuse."

"*How* old are you, Margaret?" said she abruptly, after a long silence.

"Twenty-two, my last birthday," answered the young lady, and looked, as if expecting a reason for the question.

"Yes; so I thought," said Miss Sheckleton. "The twenty-third of June—a midsummer birthday—your poor mamma used to say—the glow and flowers of summer—a brilliant augury."

"Brilliantly accomplished," added the girl; "don't you think so, Frisk, and you, little Comet? Are you not tired of Malory already, my friends? *My* cage is bigger, but so am I, don't you see; you'd be happier climbing and hopping among the boughs. What am *I* to you compared with liberty? I did not *ask* for you, little fools, did I? You came to me; and I will open the door of your cage some day, and give you back to the unknown—to chance—from which you came."

"You're sad to-day, my child," said Miss Sheckleton, laying her hand gently on her shoulder. "Are you vexed at what I said to you last night?"

"What did you say?"

"About these little things—the squirrels."

"No, darling, I don't care. Why should?" "They come from Fortune, and that little brown boy. They came no more to *me* than to you," said the girl carelessly. "Yes, another nut, you shall, you little wonders!"

"Now, that's just what I was going to say. I might just as well have bought them as you; and I must confess I colored my guess a little, for I only mentioned poor Whisk in passing, and I really don't know that he heard me; and I think if he had thought of getting a squirrel for us, he'd have asked leave to send it to me. I could not have objected to that, you know; and that little boy may be ill, you know; or some-

thing may have happened to delay him, and he'll turn up; and you'll have to make a bargain, and pay a fair price for them yet."

"Yes, of course; I never thought any thing else—eventually; and I knew all along you were jesting. I told these little creatures so this morning, over and over again. If they could speak they would say so. Would not you, you two dear little witches?"

So she carried out her pets with her, and hung their cage among the boughs of the tree that stood by the rustic seat to which she used to take her book.

"Well, I've relieved her mind," thought Miss Sheckleton.

But, oddly enough, she found the young lady not sad, but rather cross and fierce all that afternoon—talking more bitterly than ever to her squirrels, about Malory, and with an angry kind of gayety, of her approaching exile to France.

"It is not always easy to know how to please young ladies," thought Miss Skeckleton. "They won't always take the trouble to know their own minds. Poor thing! It *is* very lonely—very tiresome, to be sure;—and this little temper will blow over."

So, full of these thoughts, Miss Sheckleton repaired to that mysterious study door within which Sir Booth, dangerous as a caged beast, paced his floor, and stormed and ground his teeth, over—not his own vices, prodigalities, and madness, but the fancied villainies of mankind—glared through his window in his paroxysms, and sent his curses like muttered thunder across the sea over the head of old Pandillion—and then would subside, and write long, rambling, rubbishy letters to his attorneys in London, which it was Miss Sheckleton's business to enclose and direct, in her feminine hand, to her old friend, Miss Ogden, of Bolton Street, Piccadilly, who saw after the due delivery of these missives, and made herself generally useful during the mystery and crisis of the Fanshawe affairs.

Outside the sombre precincts of Malory Margaret Fanshawe would not go. Old Miss Sheckleton had urged her. Perhaps it was a girlish perversity; perhaps she really disliked the idea of again meeting or making an acquaintance. At all events, she was against any more excursions. Thus the days were dull at Malory, and even Miss Sheckleton was weary of her imprisonment.

It is a nice thing to hit the exact point of reserve and difficulty at which an interest of a certain sort is piqued, without danger of being killed. Perhaps it is seldom compassed by art, and a fluke generally does it. I am absolutely certain that there was no design here. But there is a spirit of contrariety—a product of pride, of a sensitiveness almost morbid, of a reserve gliding into duplicity, a duplicity without calculation—which yet operates like design. Cleve was piqued—Cleve was angry. The spirit of the chase was roused, as often as he looked at the dusky woods of Malory.

And now he had walked on three successive days past the old gateway, and on each of them loitered long on that wind-beaten hill that overlooks the grounds of Malory. But in vain. He was no more accustomed to wait than Louis XIV. No wonder he grew impatient, and meditated the wildest schemes—even that of walking up to the hall door, and asking to see Sir Booth and Miss Sheckleton, and, if need be, Miss Fanshawe. He only knew that, one way or another, he *must* see her. He was a young man of exorbitant impatience, and a violent will, and would control events.

There are consequences, of course, and these subjugators are controlled in their turn. Time, as mechanical science shows us, is an element in power; and patience is in durability. God waits, and God is might. And without patience we enter not into the kingdom of God, which is the kingdom of power, and the kingdom of eternity.

Cleve Verney's romance next morning was doomed to a prosaic interruption. He was examining a chart of the Cardyllian estuary, which hangs in the library, trying to account for the boat's having touched the bank at low water, at a point where he fancied there was a fathom to spare, when the rustic servant entered with—

"Please, sir, a gentleman which his name is Mr. Larkin, is at the door, and wishes to see you, sir, on partickler business, please."

"Just wait a moment, Edward. Three fathom—two—four feet—by Jove! So it is. We might have been aground for five hours; a shame there isn't a buoy there—got off in a coach, by Jove. *Larkin?* Has he no card?"

"Yes, sir, please."

"Oh! yes—very good. Mr. Larkin—The Lodge. Does he look like a gatekeeper?"

"No, sir, please; quite the gentleman."

"What the devil can he want of me? Are you certain he did not ask for my uncle?"

"Yes, sir—the Honorable Mr. Verney—which I told him he wasn't here."

"And why did not you send him away, then?"

"He asked if you were here, and wished to see you partickler, sir."

"Larkin—The Lodge; what is he like—tall or short—old or young?" asked Cleve.

"Tall gentleman, please, sir—not young—helderly, sir, raypher."

"By Jove! Larkin? I think it *is*.—Is he bald—a long face, eh?" asked Cleve with sudden interest.

"Yes, sir, a good deal in that way, sir—raypher."

"Show him in," said Cleve; "I shall hear all about it now," he soliloquized as the man departed. "Yes, the luckiest thing in the world?"

The tall attorney, with the tall bald forehead and pink eyelids, entered simpering, with hollow jaws, and a stride that was meant to be perfectly easy and gentlemanlike. Mr. Larkin had framed his costume upon something he had once seen upon somebody whom he secretly worshiped as a great authority in quiet elegance. But

every article in the attorney's wardrobe looked always new—a sort of lavender was his favorite tint—a lavender waistcoat, lavender trowsers, lavender gloves—so that, as the tall lank figure came in, a sort of blooming and vernal effect, in spite of his open black frock-coat, seemed to enter and freshen the chamber.

"How d'ye do, Mr. Larkin? My uncle is at present in France. Sit down, pray—can I be of any use?" said Cleve, who now recollected his appearance perfectly, and did not like it.

The attorney, smiling engagingly, more and more, and placing a very smooth new hat upon the table, sat himself down, crossing one long leg over the other, throwing himself languidly back, and letting one of his long arms swing over the back of his chair, so that his fingers almost touched the floor, said—

"Oh?" in a prolonged tone of mild surprise. "They quite misinformed me in town—not at Verney House—I did not allow myself time to call there; but my agents, they assured me that your uncle, the Honorable Kiffyn Fulke Verney, was at present down here at Ware, and a most exquisite retreat it certainly is. My occupations, and I may say my habits, call me a good deal among the residences of our aristocracy," he continued, with a careless grandeur and a slight wave of his hand, throwing himself a little more back, "and I have seen nothing, I assure you, Mr. Verney, more luxurious and architectural than this patrician house of Ware, with its tasteful colonnade, and pilastered front, and the distant view of the fashionable watering-place of Cardyllian, which also belongs to the family; nothing certainly lends a more dignified charm to the scene, Mr. Verney, than a distant view of family property, where, as in this instance, it is palpably accidental—where it is at all forced, as in the otherwise highly magnificent seat of my friend Sir Thomas Omnibull, baronet, so far from elevating, it pains one, it hurts one's taste"—and Mr. Jos. Larkin shrugged and winced a little, and shook his head—"Do *you* know Sir Thomas?—*no*—I dare say—he's quite a new man, Sir Thomas—we all look on him in that light in our part of the world—a—in fact, a *parvenu*," which word Mr. Larkin pronounced as if it were spelled *pair vennew*. "But, you know, the British Constitution, every man may go up—we can't help it—we can't keep them down. Money is power, Mr. Verney, as the Earl of Coachhouse once said to me—and so it is; and when they make a lot of it, they come up, and we must only receive them, and make the best of them."

"Have you had breakfast, Mr. Larkin?" inquired Cleve, in answer to all this.

"Thanks, yes—at Llewinan—a very sweet spot—one of the sweetest, I should say, in this beauteous country."

"I don't know—I dare say—I think you wished to see me on business, Mr. Larkin?" said Cleve.

"I must say, Mr. Verney, you will permit me, that I really have been taken a little by surprise. I had expected confidently to find your uncle, the Honorable Kiffyn Fulke Verney, here, where I had certainly no hope of having the honor of finding you."

I must here interpolate the fact that no person in or out of England was more exactly apprised of the whereabout of the Verneys, uncle and nephew, at the moment when he determined to visit Ware, with the ostensible object of seeing the Hon. Kiffyn Fulke, and the real one of seeing Mr. Cleve, than was my friend Mr. Larkin. He was, however, as we know, a gentleman of ingenious morals and labyrinthine tastes. With Truth he was, as it were, on bowing terms, and invariably spoke of her with respect, but that was all. There was no intimacy, she was an utterly impracticable adviser, and Mr. Larkin had grown up under a more convenient tuition.

"The information, however, I feel concerns you, my dear sir, as nearly, in a manner, as it does your uncle; in fact, your youth taken into account, more momentously than it can so old a gentleman. I would therefore merely venture to solicit one condition, and that is, that you will be so good as not to mention me to your uncle as having conveyed this information to you, as he might himself have wished to be the first person to open it, and my having done so might possibly induce in his mind an unpleasant feeling."

"I shan't see my uncle before the fifteenth," said Cleve Verney.

"A long wait, Mr. Verney, for such intelligence as it falls to my lot to communicate, which, in short, I shall be most *happy* to lay before you; provided you will be so good as to say you desire it on the condition I feel it due to all parties to suggest."

"You mean that my uncle need not be told any thing about this interview. I don't see that he *need*, if it concerns *me*. What concerns *him*, I suppose you will tell him, Mr. Larkin."

"Quite so; that's quite my meaning; merely to avoid unpleasant feeling. I am most anxious to acquaint you—but you understand the delicacy of my position with your uncle—and that premised, I have now to inform you"—here he dropped his voice, and raised his hand a little, like a good man impressing a sublime religious fact—"that your uncle, the Honorable Arthur Verney, is no more."

The young man flushed up to the very roots of his hair. There was a little pink flush, also, on the attorney's long cheeks; for there was something exciting in even making such an announcement. The consequences were so unspeakably magnificent.

Mr. Larkin saw a vision of permanent, confidential, and lucrative relations with the rich Verney family, such as warmed the cool tide of his blood, and made him feel for the moment at peace with all mankind. Cleve was looking in the attorney's eyes—the attorney in his. There was a silence for while you might count three or four. Mr. Larkin saw that his intended client, Cleve—the future Viscount Verney—was

dazzled, and a little confounded. Recollecting himself, he turned his shrewd gaze on the marble face of Plato, who stood on his pedestal near the window, and a smile seraphic and melancholy lighted up the features and the sad pink eyes of the godly attorney. He raised them; he raised his great hand in the lavender glove, and shook his long head devoutly.

"Mysterious are the dealings of Providence, Mr. Verney; happy those who read the lesson, sir. How few of us so favored! wonderful are His ways!"

With a little effort, and an affectation of serenity, Cleve spoke—

"No very great wonder, however, considering he was sixty-four in May last." The young man knew his vagabond Uncle Arthur's age to an hour, and nobody can blame him much for his attention to those figures. "It might not have happened, of course, for ten or twelve years, but it might have occurred, I suppose, at any moment. How did it happen? Do you know the particulars? But, is there—is there no (he was ashamed to say hope) no chance that he may still be living?—is it quite certain?"

"Perfectly certain, *perfectly*. In a family matter, I have always made it a rule to *be* certain before speaking. No trifling with sacred feelings, that has been my rule, Mr. Verney, and although in this case there are mitigations as respects the survivors, considering the life of privation and solitude, and, as I have reason to know, of ceaseless self-abasement and remorse, which was all that remained to your unhappy relative, the Honorable Arthur Verney, it was hardly to be desired that the event should be very much longer deferred."

Cleve Verney looked for a moment on the table, in the passing contagion of the good attorney's high moral tone.

Cleve just said "*yes*," in a low tone, and shook his head. But rallying, he remarked—

"You, of course, know how the title is affected by this event—and the estates?" And as he raised his eyes he encountered the attorney's fixed upon him with that peculiar rat-like vigilance, concentrated and dangerous, which, as we know, those meek orbs sometimes assumed when his own interests and objects were intensely present to his mind.

Cleve's eye shrank for a second under the enigmatic scrutiny which as instantly gave way, in turn, before *his* glance.

"Oh, certainly," said the attorney, "the public know always something of great houses, and their position; that is, *generally*, of course—details are quite another affair. But every one knows the truly magnificent position, Mr. Verney, in which the event places your uncle, and I may say you. At the same time the House of Lords, *your* house, I may call it now, are, very properly, particular in the matter of evidence."

"Our consul, I suppose," said Cleve—"

"If he were cognizant of all the points necessary to put in proof, the case would be a very simple one indeed," said Mr. Larkin, with a sad smile, slowly shaking his tall head.

"Where, Mr. Larkin, did my poor uncle die?" inquired Cleve, with a little effort at the word "uncle."

"In Constantinople, sir—a very obscure quarter. His habits, Mr. Verney, were very strange; he lived like a rat—I should say a *rabbit* in a burrow. Darkness, sir, obscurity—known, I believe, personally to but two individuals. Strange fate, Mr. Verney, for one born to so brilliant an inheritance. Known to but two individuals, one of whom died—what a thing life is!—but a few months before him, leaving, I may say, but one reliable witness to depose to his death; and, for certain reasons, that witness is most reluctant to leave Constantinople, and not very easily to be discovered, even there. You see, Mr. Verney, now, probably, something of the difficulty of the case. Fortunately, I have got some valuable information, confidential, I may say, in its nature, and with the aid of a few valuable local agents, providentially at this moment at my disposal, I think the difficulty may be quite overcome."

"If old Arthur Verney is dead, I'll find proof of the fact," said Cleve; "I'll send out people who will know how to come at it."

"You must be well advised, and very cautious, Mr. Verney—in fact, I may tell you, you can't be *too* cautious—for I happen to know that a certain low firm are already tampering with the witness."

"And how the devil can it concern any firm to keep us—my Uncle Kiffyn Verney out of his rights?" said Mr. Cleve Verney, scornfully.

"Very true, Mr. Verney, in one sense, *no* motive; but I am older in the sad experience of the world than you, Mr. Verney. At your age I *could* not believe it, much later I *would* not. But, ah! Mr. Verney, in the long run the facts are too strong for us. Poor, miserable, fallen human nature, it is capable of *any thing*. It is only too true, and too *horrible*. It sticks at *nothing*, my dear Mr. Verney, and their object is to command the witness by this means, and to dictate terms to you—in fact, my dear Mr. Verney, it is shocking to think of it—to *extort money*."

"I hope you over-estimate the difficulty. If the death has occurred, I wager my life we'll prove it, and come what will, I hope my uncle will never be persuaded to give those scoundrels a shilling."

"Certainly not—not a shilling—not a farthing—but I have taken prompt, and I trust decisive steps to checkmate those gentlemen. I am not at liberty, just at present, to disclose all I know; I don't say that I could exactly undertake the management of the case, but I shall be very happy to volunteer all the assistance in my power; and as I say, some accidental circumstances place me in a position to undertake that you shall not be defeated. A break-down, I may mention, would be a more serious matter than you seem to suppose; in fact, I should prefer

the Honorable Arthur Verney's living for twelve years more, with clear proof of his death at the end of that time, than matters as they stand at present, with a failure of the necessary proof."

"Thank you very much, Mr. Larkin; my uncle, I am sure, will also be *very* much obliged. I understand, of course, the sort of difficulty you apprehend."

"It is not conjectural, Mr. Verney, I wish it were—but it's past *that;* it *exists,*" said the attorney sadly.

"Well, I can only say we are very much obliged," said Cleve, quite honestly. "I shan't forget your wish, that I should not mention our conversation to my uncle, and if you should learn any thing farther—".

"You shall certainly hear it, Mr. Verney. I must now take my leave. Sweet day, and a beauteous country! How blest you are, Mr. Verney, in your situation! I allude to your scenery, and I may add, the architectural magnificence of this princely residence. What a row of windows as I approached the house! What a number of bedrooms you must have! Hardly so many, let us hope, as there are mansions, Mr. Verney, in that house to which we humbly trust we are proceeding." Mr. Larkin, who on his way had called professionally upon a subscriber to the Gylingden Chapel—an "eminent Christian"—and talked accordingly—perceived that his meat was a little too strong for a babe of Mr. Verney's standing, and concluded more like an attorney of this world.

"Splendid and convenient residence, and in all respects suitable, Mr. Verney, to the fine position of usefulness and, I may say, splendor, to which you are about being called," and he smiled round upon the bookcases and furniture, and waved his hand gently, as if in the act of diffusing a benediction.

"Won't you take something, Mr. Larkin, before you go?" asked Cleve.

"No—thanks—no, Mr. Verney, many thanks. It is but an hour since I had my modest *dejeuner* at that sweet little inn at Llewinan."

So on the door-steps they parted; the attorney smiling quite celestially, and feeling all aglow with affability, virtue, and a general sense of acceptance. In fact he was pleased with his morning's work for several reasons—pleased with himself, with Cleve Verney, and confident of gliding into the management of the Verney estates, and in great measure of the Verneys themselves; now seeing before him, in the great and cloudy vista of his future, a new and gorgeous castle in the air. These chateaux in the good man's horizon had, of late, been multiplying rapidly, and there was now quite a little city of palaces in his perspective—an airy pageant which, I think, he sometimes mistook for the New Jerusalem, he talked and smiled so celestially when it was in view.

CHAPTER XV.

WITHIN THE SANCTUARY.

"So the old man of the mountains is dead at last," thought Cleve. "Poor old sinner—what a mess he made of it—Uncle Arthur! Fine cards, uncle, ill played, sir. I wonder what it all was. To judge by the result, he must have been a precious fool. Of what sort was your folly, I wonder—weak brains, or violent will. They say he was clever,—a little bit mad, I dare say; an idea ran away with him, whip and spurs, but no bridle—not unlike me, I sometimes think, headstrong—headlong—but I'll never run in *your* track, though I may break my neck yet. And so this Viscount Verney, *de jure*—outcast and renegade, *de facto*—has died in one of those squalid lanes of Constantinople, and lies among poor Asiatics, in a Turkish cemetery! This was the meaning of my Uncle Kiffyn's letter—never was mortal in such a fuss and flurry about any thing, as he is at this moment; and yet he must practice his affectation of indifference, and his airs of superiority—what a fool my Uncle Kiffyn is!"

Cleve walked back to the study. Things looked changed, somehow. He had never perceived before how old and dingy the furniture was, and how shabby the paint and gilding had grown.

"This house must be made habitable, one of the first things," said he, and we must take our right place in the county. The Hammerdons have been every thing here. It must not be so."

Cleve went to the window and looked out. The timber of Ware is old and magnificent. The view of Malory and Cardyllian and all that Verney sea-board does make an imposing display across the water. The auctioneering slang of the attorney had under its glare and vulgarity a pleasant foundation of truth, and as the young man viewed this landscape the sun seemed to brighten over it, and he smiled with a new and solemn joy swelling at his heart.

"I hope that attorney fellow, Larkin, will go on and work this thing properly. It would be too bad that any delay should occur for want of proof—another name for want of energy—after the unfortunate old fellow has actually died."

Mr. Larkin's card was upon the table, and with the providence which in all small matters distinguished him, he had written under "The Lodge" his post-town, "Gylingden." So Cleve Verney wrote forthwith to tell him that although he had no authority to direct inquiries in the matter, and that his uncle would, of course, undertake *that*, he was yet so strongly of opinion that *no time* should be wasted, and that Mr. Larkin's services might be of the greatest possible value, that he could not forbear writing to say so; and also that he would take the first opportunity of pressing that view upon his uncle. So the letter found the good attorney that evening at "The Lodge." He needed no such spur. He was, in fact, very deep in the business al-

ready, and, with his own objects in view, was perhaps quite as much excited as either Cleve Verney or his uncle.

When Cleve had dispatched this note, the restlessness and fever of this new and great suspense were upon him. It was impossible to sit down and read his magazines and newspapers. Had he been a fisherman, he might have taken his rod and fly-book, and becalmed his excited spirit in that mysterious absorption. But he had never possessed patience for the gentle craft. It ought to be cultivated early for its metaphysical virtues—neither transient like music nor poisonous like opium. For a harassed or excited mind, priceless is the resource of being able to project itself into the condition of the otter or the crane, and think of *nothing* but fish.

Two sedatives, however, were at his disposal —cigars and the sea—and to them he betook himself. Away went the *Wave* over the sparkling sea, with a light breeze, toward the purple dome of Pendillion, streaked with dull yellow rock and towering softly in the distance. Delightful sea-breeze, fragrant cigars, and gently-rising, misty woods of Malory with their romantic interest—and all seen under the glory of this great news from the East. The cutter seemed to dance and writhe along the waves in elation and delight, and the spray flew up like showers of brilliants from the hands of friendly Undines sporting round her bows. Trance-like it seemed, all musical and dreamy; and Cleve felt, for the hour, he could have lived and died in that luxurious fascination.

Away for Pendillion ran the cutter. He did not choose idle tongues in Cardyllian to prate of his hovering about Malory. He knew his yacht would be seen from the pier. Active Captain Shrapnell frequented it, and would forthwith report her course in the billiard and reading-rooms, with such conjectures as might strike his ingenious mind. So the cutter should run for that remote headland for nearly an hour, and then with a change of tack for Penruthyn Priory, which was hidden from Cardyllian eyes by intervening promontories; and not one of the wiseacres could tell or guess where he had been.

When the sail of the yacht had grown like a gray speck in the distance, she was put about, and at a sharp angle ran to the rude pier of Penruthyn Priory, whence taking his gun as if for a ramble in the Warren, he told his men to expect him in about two hours, at the turn of the tide.

Across the Warren there is a wild pathway which leads toward Malory, coming out upon the old road close by Llanderris church-yard, and within a few minutes' walk of the wooded grounds of the ancient dower house of the Verneys.

Approached from this point, there is a peculiar melancholy in the old wood. The quiet little church of Llanderris, and the grave-yard with its old yew-tree, and the curve of the narrow road overhung by ivy-mantled ash-trees form the foreground, as you approach the wildest side of the woodlands, which lie at the foot of the gentle descent.

The little by-road making a sweep skirts the rear of the Malory grounds. Here the great hawthorn hedges have, time out of mind, been neglected, and have grown gigantic and utterly irregular, stooping from the grassy bank like isolated trees, and leaving wide gaps through which you may see the darkened sward, the roots and stems of the forest trees within, and the vistas that break dimly into the distance.

Hours had passed since the *Wave* had left the jetty of Ware, and the autumnal sun was already declining in the early evening. There is no hour and no light, not even night and moonlight, so favorable to a certain pensive and half saddened view of fancy, as that at which the day gives signs of approaching farewell, and gilds the landscape with a funereal splendor.

When Cleve reached the old road that descends by the church-yard, and through its double hedge-rows looked down upon the enchanted grounds of Malory, he slackened his pace, and fell into a sort of reverie and rapture.

There are few of the impostures we commit more amusing than that which we habitually practice upon ourselves in assigning the highest moral motives for doing what pleases us best.

"If my Uncle Arthur had married some one whom he really loved, how differently all might have gone with him! Here am I, with more money ultimately awaiting me than I shall really care to spend. One thousand pounds with me will do more than two thousand with most other men. I don't play. I'm not on the turf. Why should I sacrifice my chance of happiness for the sake of a little more money, which I really don't want, or for the sake of party connection? If I can't make my way without the aid of a wife, I'm not fit for politics, and the sooner I turn to something else the better. Every man ought to consult his affections, and to make his home the centre of them. Where is the good of fortune, and money, and all that, if it does not enable one to do so? How can you love your children if you don't love their mother—if you hate her, by Jove—as I know fellows that do. Settlements, and political influence—all very fine—and we expect happiness to come of itself, when we have sold our last chance of it."

In this vein was Cleve Verney's contemplation —and even more virtuous and unworldly as he proceeded—in the elation of his new sense of omnipotence and glory. Had he been a little franker with himself, he might have condensed it thus—"A fancy has taken possession of me, and I don't choose to deny myself."

Troubling his visions, however, was the image of his uncle, and the distant sound of his cold uncomfortable voice, and a sense of severity, selfishness and danger, under his feeble smile. Against this teasing phantom with its solemn prattle, however, he closed his eyes and shook his ears. He had never enjoyed a sail or a walk so in all his life. Was nature ever so glorious

before, or romance so noble and tender? What a pensive glow and glory was over every thing! He walked down the steep little curve of the old road, and found himself on the path that follows the low bank and thorn-trees which fence in the woods of Malory.

Walking slowly, and now and then pausing, he looked among the trunks and down the opening aisles of the wood. But there was no sign of life. The weeds nodded in the shadow, and now and then a brown leaf fell. It was like the wood of the "Sleeping Beauty." The dusky sun-light touched it drowsily, and all the air was silent and slumberous.

The path makes a turn round a thick clump of trees, and, as he passed this, on a sudden he saw the beautiful young lady standing near the bank, her hat thrown on the ground, the thick folds of her chestnut hair all golden in the misty sunlight. Never so like the Guido before. The large eyes, the delicate, oval, and pearly tints, and the small vermillion mouth, its full lips parted, he could see the sunlight glitter on the edge of the little teeth within.

A thrill—a kind of shiver—passed through him, as if at sight of a beautiful spectre. She saw him stop, and in the momentary silence he thought—was it fancy?—he saw a blush just tinge her cheeks. On the bank, glimmering in the sun-light, was the cage with the little squirrels hopping inside.

"What a sweet evening!" said he. "I've been down to Penruthyn Priory—I've grown so fond of that old place. I used not to care about it, but—but one changes—and now it seems to me the most interesting place in the world, except, perhaps, one. *You* tired of it very quickly, Miss Fanshawe. You have not half seen it, you know. Why don't you come and see it again?"

"I suppose we ought to," said the young lady, "and I dare say we shall."

"Then do to-morrow, pray," said he.

She laughed, and said—

"An excursion like that must always depend on the whim of the moment, don't you think, to be the least pleasant? It loses its charm the moment it loses the air of perfect liberty and caprice; and I don't know whether we shall ever see the old Priory again."

"I'm very sorry," said Cleve. There was honest disappointment in his tone, and his dark soft eyes looked full in hers.

She laughed again a little, and looking at the pretty old Church of Llanderris, that stands among nodding ash-trees on the near upland, she said—

"That old church is, I think, quite beautiful. I was exploring these woods with my little squirrels here, when I suddenly came upon this view, and here I have stood for nearly ten minutes."

"I'm very much obliged, I know, to Llanderris Church, and I'm glad you admire it, for I like it very much myself," said Cleve. "And so you have got two squirrels. I was so sorry to hear last Sunday that you had lost your little pet, Whisk. Wasn't that his name?"

"Yes. Poor little Whisk!"

"And you're not going to leave Malory?"

"Not immediately, I believe," said Miss Fanshawe.

"That makes me very happy for *three* reasons. First, it proves that you have some confidence after all, in me; and next, because it shows that you are not so troubled here as you feared you might be; and the third reason—perhaps you shall never know until, at least, you can guess it."

"Yes; papa is not talking of leaving immediately, and I'm glad of it, for I know it was important that he should be able for a little time longer to remain in England. And now I think my little squirrels want their nuts, and I must go."

"Poor little prisoners! You're all prisoners here. You shut yourselves up so jealously," said Cleve. "The monastic spirit still haunts this place, I think. It must be that old convent ground. Almost every day I walk by this old place, and never have seen you once, even through the grille, until to-day."

She stooped to pick up the cage.

"I'm sure you'll shake hands before you go, Miss Fanshawe, won't you, through the grille—the hedge, I mean?"

"Well, I wish you good-bye," she said merrily, but without coming nearer.

"And we are good friends?"

"Oh, yes."

"And—and I'll tell you a secret, but you must forgive me." As he spoke, Cleve Verney, with a step or two, mounted the bank and stood beside the young lady within the precincts of Malory.

"Don't mind coming in, pray," said she.

"Only for a moment—only one word," he sought Cleve.

"Well," laughed Miss Fanshawe, though he thought a little uneasily, for she glanced toward the house, and he fancied was thinking of Sir Booth. "If you *will*, I can't help it; only you must remember there are dogs in the yard, and" she added, more gravely, papa has so many notices up to keep people away, I think he'd be vexed."

"Here I'm almost on neutral ground. It is only a step, and I'm gone. I want to tell you—you must forgive me—but it was I who ventured to send that little boy with those squirrels there. I knew how lonely you were, and I was selfish enough to wish to give you even so small an evidence of the sincerity of my professions—my anxiety to be employed."

"That little boy promised to return, but has never come back," said Miss Fanshawe, throwing back her head a little, and pushing back her rich tresses. He thought there was a brighter color in her cheeks, and that she looked a little haughty. She was certainly very grave.

"He could not help it, poor little fellow. He lives at Pendillion, nine miles across the water, and nearly thirty by the road. You must lay the whole blame upon me—you must, indeed. It's all my fault."

Miss Fanshawe was looking haughtily down upon the unconscious squirrels. There was something of disdain in this glance that fell from under her long silken lashes askance upon them, hopping and frisking within their wires, as if she meditated sending them away in disgrace,

"You must not be vexed with *them* either, it is all my doing, my fault, let me confess. I ran down in my boat to Pendillion, and looked up that little fellow who always has half a dozen squirrels. I had to go twice to find him, and then brought him here, and he met a lady in the wood. There was no mistaking the description, and so these little creatures are your happy captives—and—and I hope you are not very angry with me."

The color was brilliant in her cheeks, and gave a corresponding brilliancy to her great eyes; how were they so myterious and yet so frank? She looked on him gravely in silence for a moment, and then down upon the little prisoners in the cage. Was she angry—was she embarrassed—was she secretly pleased? That odd, beautiful girl—he could not quite understand her.

But Mr. Cleve Verney was an impetuous orator; when he took fire upon a theme he ran on daringly—

"And I've done more—I'm even *more* guilty; I'll hide nothing—I've taken a great reward—I've got a talisman that I prize above any thing—this little coin;" and there was a bright shilling fixed like a "charm" to his watch-guard. "It is *mine*—you only can guess; no one shall ever know why I wore it next my heart, and you may blame, but you wont't *quite* condemn me; and won't you make it up with those poor little squirrels, and tell me it's all forgiven, and—by Jove, here's Miss Sheckleton."

And so she was approaching with her firm light step, and pleasant smile, in the shadow of the great trees, and near enough already to greet Mr. Verney with—

"How d'ye do? What a charming evening!" and having arrived at the hawthorn tree beside which they were standing, she added, in the low tone in which she habitually spoke of the Baronet—"Sir Booth is not very well this evening—he's in his room, and he'll stay at home reading the newspapers, at all events for an hour or so."

There was a want of tact in this little intimation which had an effect quite different from that which the good-natured spinster intended; for Miss Fanshawe said, lifting the little cage, and looking upon its tiny inhabitants in the sunlight—

"Then I had better run in and see him." And with a gay slight "Good-bye," she nodded to Mr. Cleve Verney. The smile was only a momentary light, and the great hazel eyes looked thoughtfully as she turned away; and as she disappeared among the old trees, it seemed to him that a dull shadow suddenly descended upon the trees, and the grass, and the landscape.

"We are always, Mr. Verney, in a fuss here; that is, we never know exactly what a post may bring us any morning or evening, or how suddenly we may have to go. You may guess what it is to *me*, who have to arrange every thing," said the old lady, lifting her thin fingers and shaking her head. "As for Margaret there, she's both clever and energetic—but *no* experience; and therefore, I don't allow her to take her share. Poor thing, it is a sad thing for her, and this place so very solitary."

"You must make her come to-morrow," said Cleve, "and see the Priory; you only *half* saw it the other day, and I assure you it *is* really well worth looking at; and it will make an excuse to tempt her outside this gloomy place. I can't conceive any thing worse than being shut up week after week in this solitude and darkness; you really *must* persuade her. At what hour do you think you will be there?"

"Well now, I really *will* try," said good-natured Miss Sheckleton, "positively I will; and I think about three o'clock—I'll make an effort; and I'll send for the boat without asking her, and she can hardly refuse me then. You have not been here very long, Mr. Verney?" she added with a not unnatural curiosity.

"Only a minute or two before you came," he answered, a little inaccurately, I think.

"Well, then, to-morrow I hope to tempt her out a little, as you advise; and—and"—she glanced over her shoulder toward the house—"perhaps I had better bid you good-bye for the present, Mr. Verney; good-bye! How beautiful every thing looks!"

She gave him her hand very cordially. Was there a sort of freemasonry and a romantic sympathy in that kindly farewell? Cleve felt that she at least half understood him. Even in reserved natures there is an instinctive yearning for a confidant in such situations, and a friendly recognition, even at a distance, of one that promises to fill that place of sympathy.

So there they parted with friendly looks, in a friendly spirit. Romantic and simple Miss Sheckleton, he felt that you were a true denizen of those regions in which of late he had been soaring, unworldly, true. It is well for a time to put off the profound attorney-nature of man—we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out—and to abandon ourselves for a few happy moments to the poetry and kindness which are eternal.

CHAPTER XVI.

AN UNLOOKED-FOR VISITOR.

In romances, it is usual for lovers to dream a great deal, and always of the objects of their adorations. We acquiesce gravely and kindly in these conventional visions; but, on reflection, we must admit that lovers have no faculty of dreaming, and of selecting the subjects of their dreams, superior to that of ordinary persons. Cleve, I allow, sat up rather late that night, thinking, I venture to say, a great deal about the

beautiful young lady who, whether for good or ill, now haunted his thoughts incessantly; and with this brilliant phantom he walked romantically in the moonlight, by the chiming shnigle of the sea. But I don't know what his dreams were about, or that he had any dreams at all; and in fact, I believe he slept very soundly, but awoke in the morning with a vague anticipation of something very delightful and interesting. Why is it that when we first awake the pleasures or the horrors of the coming day seem always most intense?

Another bright autumnal day with just breeze enough to fill the sails of the cutter. On his breakfast-table, from the post-office of Ware, lay a letter, posted over night at Gylingden, by his newly revealed good angel, "very truly, his," Jos. Larkin. It said—

"My dear Sir—The interview with which you this morning honored me, conveyed more fully even that your note implies, your wishes on the subject of it. Believe me, I needed no fresh incentive to exertion in a matter so pregnant with serious results, and shall be only too happy to expend thought, time, and money, in securing *with promptitude* a successful termination of what in dilatory or inexperienced hands might possibly prove a most tedious and distressing case. I have before me directions of proofs on which I have partially acted, and mean in the sequel to do so completely. I may mention that there awaited me on my arrival a letter from my agent, to whom I more particularly referred in the conversation which you were pleased to invite this morning, conveying information of very high importance, of which I shall be happy to apprise you in detail, when next I have the honor of a conference. I am not quite clear as to whether I mentioned this morning a person named Dingwell?

"No, you did not," interpolated Cleve.

"Who," continued the letter, "resides under circumstances of considerable delicacy on his part at Constantinople, and who has hitherto acted as the correspondent and agent of the Jewish firm, through whom the Dowager Lady Verney and your uncle, the Hon. Kiffyn Fulke Verney, were accustomed, with a punctuality so honorable to their feelings, to forward the respective annuities, which they were so truly considerate as mutually to allow for the maintenance of the unfortunate deceased. This gentleman, Mr. Dingwell, has been unhappily twice a bankrupt in London in early life, and there are still heavy judgments against him; and as he is the only witness discoverable, competent, from his habits of regular communication with your lamented uncle for years, to depose to his identity and his death, it is unfortunate that there should exist, for the special reasons I have mentioned, considerable risk and difficulty in his undertaking to visit London, for the purpose of making the necessary depositions; and I fear he can not be induced to take that step without some considerable pecuniary sacrifice on your part. This will necessarily form one of the topics for discussion at the proposed conference of the 15th prox.; and it is no small point in our favor satisfactorily to be assured that a witness to the cardinal points to which I have referred is actually produceable, and at this moment in communication with me.

"I have the honor to be, dear sir, very truly yours, Jos. Larkin.

"The Lodge, Gylingden.

"P.S. I may mention that the Jewish firm to which I have referred, have addressed to me a letter, apprising me of the decease of the Hon. Arthur Verney, a step which, as terminating the annuities on which they received an annual percentage, they would not, I presume, have adopted had they not been absolutely certain of the event, and confident also that we must, if they were silent, be otherwise apprised of it."

I think our old friend, Jos. Larkin, wrote this letter with several views, one of which was that in the event of his thinking proper, some years hence, notwithstanding his little flourishes of gratuitous service, to unmuzzle the ox who had trod out the corn, and to send in his little bill, it might help to show that he had been duly instructed to act in this matter at least by Mr. Cleve Verney. The other object, that of becoming the channel of negotiating terms with Mr. Dingwell, offered obvious advantages to a gentleman of acquisitive diplomacy and ingenious morals.

Cleve, however, had not yet learned to suspect this Christian attorney, and the letter on the whole was highly satisfactory.

"Capital man of business, this Mr. Larkin! Who could have expected an answer, and so full an answer, so immediately to his letter! That is the kind of attorney the world signed for. Eager, prompt, clear, making his clients' interests his own"—more literally sometimes than Cleve was yet aware—"disinterested, spirited, for was not he risking his time, skill, and even money, without having been retained in this matter, and with even a warning that he might possibly never be so? Did he not also come in the livery of religion, and discuss business, as it were, in a white robe and with a palm in his hand? And was it not more unlikely that a man who committed himself every hour to the highest principles should practice the lowest, than a person who shirked the subject of virtue, and thought religion incongruous with his doings? Perhaps," Cleve thought, "there is a little too much of that solemn flam. But who can object if it helps to keep him straight?"

This was a day of surprises. Cleve had gone up to his room to replenish his cigar-case, when a chaise drove up to the hall door of Ware, and looking out, he beheld with a sense of dismay his uncle's man, Mr. Ridley, descending from his seat on the box, and opening the door of the vehicle, from which the thin stiff figure of the Hon. Kiffyn Fulke Verney descended, and entered the house.

Could the devil have hit upon a more ill-natured plan for defeating the delightful hopes of that day? Why could not that teasing old man stay where he was? Heaven only knows for how many days he might linger at Ware, lecturing Cleve upon themes on which his opinion was not worth a pin, directing him to write foolish letters, and now and then asking him to *obleege* him by copying papers, of which he required duplicates, benumbing him by his chilly presence, and teasing him by his exactions.

Cleve groaned when he saw this spectacle from his window, and muttered something, I don't care what.

"Let him send for me if he wants me. I shan't pretend to have seen him," was Cleve's petulant resolve. But a knock at his room door, with an invitation from his uncle to visit him in the library, settled the question.

"How d'ye, do, Cleve," and his uncle, who was sitting in a great chair at the table, with some letters, noted, and folded into long slim parallelograms, already before him, put forth a thin hand for him to shake, throwing back his head; and fixing his somewhat dull gray eyes with an imperious sort of curiosity upon him, he said, "Yes—yes—recruiting. I was always in favor of making the most of the recess, about it. You make the most of it. I saw Winkledon and your friend Colonel Tellerton at Dyce's yesterday, and talked with 'em, about it, and they both agreed with me we are pretty sure of a stormy session, late sittings, and no end of divisions, and I am glad you are taking your holiday so sensibly. The *Wave's* here, isn't she? and you sail in her a good deal, I dare say, about it, and you've got yourself a good deal sunburnt. Yes, the sun does that; and you're looking very well, about it, I think, very well indeed."

To save the reader trouble, I mention here, that the Hon Kiffyn Fulke Verney has a habit of introducing the words "about it," as every body is aware who has the honor of knowing him, without relation to their meaning, but simply to caulk, as it were, the seams of his sentences, to stop them where they open, and save his speech from foundering for want of this trifling halfpenny worth of oakum.

"Very lonely, sir, Ware is. You've come to stay for a little time perhaps."

"Oh! no. Oh, dear no. My view upon that subject is very decided indeed, as you know. I ask myself this question—What good can I possibly do, about it, by residing for any time at Ware, until my income shall have been secured, and my proper position ascertained and recognized? I find myself, by the anomalous absurdity of our existing law, placed in a position, about it, of so much difficulty and hardship, that although the people must feel it very much, and the country regret it, I feel it only due to myself, to wash my hands, about it, of the entire thing for the present, and to accept the position of a mere private gentleman, which the existing law, in its wisdom, imposes upon me—don't you see?"

"It certainly is," acquiesced Cleve, "a gross absurdity that there should be no provision for such a state of things."

"Absurdity! my dear sir, I don't call it *absurdity* at all, I call it rank injustice, and a positive *cruelty*," said the feeble voice of this old gentleman with an eager quaver in it, while, as always occurred when he was suddenly called on for what he called his "sentiments" upon this intolerable topic, a pink flush suffused his thin temples and narrow forehead. Here I am, about it, invested by opinion, don't you see, and a moral constraint, with the liabilities of a certain position, and yet excluded from its privileges and opportunities. And what, I ask myself, can come of such a thing, except the sort of thing, about it, which we see going on? Don't you see?"

"Any news of any kind from the East, sir?" asked Cleve,

"Well, now, wait—a—a—I'll come to it—I'm coming to that. I wrote to you to say that you were to meet me in town, d'ye see, on the fifteenth, and I mean to have a Mr. Larkin, an attorney, a very proper person in his rank of life—a very proper person—about it, to meet us and produce his papers, and make his statement again. And I may tell you that he's of opinion, and under the impression, that poor Arthur is *dead*, about it; and now you'll read this letter—very good, and now this—very good, and now this."

As he handed these papers over to Cleve in succession, the young gentleman thought his uncle's air a little grander than usual, and fancied there was a faint simper of triumph discernible under the imposing solemnity of his looks.

"A—well, that's all at present; and immediately on receiving the first of these I wrote to the consul there—a very proper man, very well connected; I was, I may say, instrumental in getting his appointment for him—saying he'd obleege me by instituting inquiry and communicating the result, and possibly I may hear before the fifteenth; and I should be very glad, about it, to learn or know something definite, in which case, you see, there would be a natural solution of the complication, and prove Arthur's death, about it, would clear up the whole thing, as in fact it does in all such cases, don't you see?"

"Of course, sir, perfectly."

"And as to mourning and all that, about it, I don't quite see my way, no, I don't; because, d'ye see, I rather think there should be nothing of the kind—but it's time enough to decide what the house of Verney are to do when I shall have all the circumstances, don't you see, and every thing."

Cleve acquiesced.

"And if the dissolution comes next autumn—as they apprehend it may—you'll have no annoyance from the old quarter—Sir Booth Fanshawe—he's quite ruined—about it; and he's been obliged to leave the country; he's in France, I understand, and I've directed our people in town to follow up the proceedings as sharply as possible. He has never spared me, egad, and has often distressed me very seriously by his

malevolent and utterly wanton opposition where he had absolutely no chance whatever, and knew it, nor any object, I give you my honor, except to waste my money, when, owing to the absurd and cruel position I was placed in, he knew very well I could not have a great deal to throw away. I look upon a person of that kind as a mere nuisance; and I look upon it as a matter of dooty and of principle, about it, which one owes to society, don't you see, to exterminate them like vermin. And if you want to stop it, you musn't let him off when you've got the advantage at last, do you see? You must follow it up, and show evil-disposed people that if they choose to play that game they may, but that you won't let 'em off, about it, and that."

These were not very pleasant words in Cleve's ears.

"And, egad, sir, I'll make an example of that person—I owe it to the principle of fair political warfare, about it. What business had he to run me into six thousand pounds expense for nothing, when he had not really a hundred pounds at the time he could call his own? And I ask myself, where's the good of laws if there's no way of reaching a person who commits, from the worst possible motives, an outrage like that, and goes on doing that sort of thing, about it?"

Here the Hon. Kiffyn Fulke Verney paused for a minute, and then looked at his watch.

"Just ten minutes still left me. I'll ask you to touch the bell, Cleve. I'm going to the railway—to Lluinan, about it, and to see the people at Heathcote Hall; and I've been thinking you ought to turn over in your mind what I said last Easter, when we were at Dawling Hill. If this affair of poor Arthur's should turn out to be quite genuine, I think the connection would recommend itself to most people," he said grandly, "and in fact you might strengthen yourself very materially, about it. You could not do better than marry Ethel; depend upon it, the connection will serve you. Her uncle, you know—always some of that family—in the Cabinet; and Dorminster, they say—every one says it—Winkledon, for instance, and Colonel Tellers, about it—they both said the other day he'll very probably be Minister. Every one says that sort of thing, about it; and it has been my opinion a long time before people generally began to say so, and things of that sort, don't you see?"

As a general rule Cleve knew that there was no use in fighting any favorite point with his uncle. He acquiesced and relied upon dilatory opportunities and passive resistance; so now he expressed himself most gratefully for the interest he had always taken in him, and seemed to lend an attentive ear, while the Hon. Kiffyn Fulke Verney rambled on upon this theme in his wise and quietly dictatorial way. It was one of his pleasantest occupations, and secretly pleased his self-love, this management of Cleve Verney—really a promising young man—and whom he magnified, as he did every thing else that belonged to him, and whose successes in the house, and growth in general estimation, he quietly took to himself as the direct consequences of his own hints and manipulations, and his "keeping the young man straight about it."

"He has an idea—the young man has—that I know something about it—that I have seen some public life, and know people—and things of that sort. He is a young man who can take a hint, and, egad, I think I've kept him pretty straight about it up to this, and put him on a right track, and things; and if I'm spared I'll put him on, sir. I know pretty well about things, and you see the people talk to me, and they listen to me, about it, and I make him understand what he's about, and things."

And then came the parting. He gave Cleve ten pounds, which Mrs. Jones, the draper's wife, used to distribute for him among certain poor people of Cardyllian. So his small soul was not destitute of kindliness, after its fashion; and he drove away from Ware, and Cleve stood upon the steps, smiling and waving his hand, and repeating "On the fifteenth," and then suddenly was grave.

CHAPTER XVII.

THEY VISIT THE CHAPEL OF PENRUTHYN.

Very grave was Cleve Verney as the vehicle disappeared. His uncle's conversation had been very dismal. "Ethel, indeed! What an old bore he is, to be sure! Well, no matter; we shall see who'll win the game. He is so obstinate and selfish." There was, indeed, an enemy in front—an up-hill battle before him. He prayed heaven, at all events, that the vindictive old gentleman might not discover the refuge of Sir Booth Fanshawe. Were he to do so, what a situation for Cleve! He would talk the matter over with his uncle's attorneys, who knew him, with whom he had often been deputed to confer on other things; who, knowing that he stood near the throne, would listen to him, and they would not be over-zealous in hunting the old Baronet down. With those shrewd suspicious fellows, Cleve would put it all on election grounds. Sir Booth was in a kind of way popular. There would be a strong feeling against any extreme or vindictive courses being taken by his uncle, and this would endanger, or at all events embarrass Cleve very seriously.

Away shadows of the future—smoke and vapors of the pit! Let us have the sun and air of heaven while we may. What a *charming* day! how light and pleasant the breeze! The sails rattle, quiver and fill, and stooping to the breeze, away goes the *Wave*—and, with a great sigh, away go Cleve's troubles, for the present; and his eye travels along the sea-board from Cardyllian on to Malory, and so to the dimmer outline of Penruthyn Priory.

As usual they ran for Pendillion—the wind favoring—and at two o'clock Cleve stood on the sea-rocked stones of the rude pier of Penruthyn,

and ordered his men to bring the yacht seaward round the point of Cardrwydd, and there to await him. There was some generalship in this. His interview of the morning had whetted his instincts of caution. Round Cardrwydd the men could not see, and besides he wanted no one—especially not that young lady, whom the sight might move to he knew not what capricious resolve, to see the *Wave* in the waters of Penruthyn.

Away went the yacht, and Cleve strolled up to the ancient Priory, from the little hillock beyond which is a view of the sea half way to Malory.

Three o'clock came and no sail in sight.

"They're not coming. I shan't see her. They must have seen our sail. Hang it, I knew we tacked too soon. And she's such an odd girl, I think, if she fancied I were here she'd rather stay at home, or go anywhere else. Three o'clock! He held his watch to his ear for a moment. "By Jove! I thought it had stopped. That hour seems so long. I won't give it up yet, though. That"—he was going to call him *brute*, but even under the irritation of the hypothesis he could not—"that oddity, Sir Booth, may have upset their plans or delayed them."

So, with another long look over the lonely sea toward Malory, he descended from his post of observation, and sauntered, rather despondingly, by the old Priory, and down the steep and pretty old road, that sinuously leads to the shore and the ruinous little quay, for which boats of tourists still make. He listened and lingered on the way. His mind misgave him. He would have deferred the moment when his last hope was to go out, and the chance of the meeting, which had been his last thought at night, and his first in the morning, should lose itself in the coming shades of night. Yes, he would allow them a little time—it could not be much—and if a sail were not in sight by the time he reached the strand, he would give all up, and set out upon his dejected walk to Cardrwydd.

He halted and lingered for a while in that embowered part of the little by-road which opens on the shore, half afraid to terminate a suspense in which was still a hope. With an effort, then, he walked on, over the little ridge of sand and stones, and, lo! there was the boat with furled sails by the broken pier, and within scarce fifty steps the Malory ladies were approaching.

He raised his hat—he advanced quickly—not knowing quite how he felt, and hardly recollecting the minute after it was spoken what he had said. He only saw that the young lady seemed surprised and grave. He thought she was even vexed.

"I'm so glad we've met you here, Mr. Verney," said artful Miss Sheckleton. "I was just thinking, compared with our last visit, how little profit we should derive from our present. I'm such a dunce in ancient art and architecture, and in all the subjects, in fact, that help one to understand such a building as this, that I despaired of enjoying our excursion at all as I did our last; but, perhaps you are leaving, and once more is too much to impose such a task as you undertook on our former visit."

"Going away! You could not really think such a thing possible, while I had a chance of your permitting me to do the honors of our poor Priory."

He glanced at Miss Fanshawe, who was at the other side of the chatty old lady, as they walked up the dim monastic road; but the Guido was looking over the low wall into the Warren, and his glance passed by unheeded.

"I'm so fond of this old place," said Cleve, to fill in a pause. "I should be ashamed to say—you'd think me a fool almost—how often I take a run over here in my boat, and wander about its grounds and walls, quite alone. If there's a transmigration of souls, I dare say mine once inhabited a friar of Penruthyn—I feel, especially since I last came to Ware, such an affection for the old place."

"It's very nice taste, Mr. Verney. You have no reason to be ashamed of it," said the old lady decisively. "Young men, nowadays, are so given up to horses and field games, and so little addicted to any thing refined, that I'm quite glad when I discover any nice taste or accomplishment among them. You must have read a great deal, Mr. Verney, to be able to tell us all the curious things you did about this old place and others."

"Perhaps I'm only making a great effort—a show of learning on an extraordinary occasion. You must see how my stock lasts to-day. You are looking into that old park, Miss Fanshawe," said Cleve, slyly crossing to her side. "We call it the Warren; but it was once the Priory Park. There is a very curious old grant from the Prior of Penruthyn, which my uncle has at Ware, of a right to pasture a certain number of cows in the park, on condition of aiding the Verderor in keeping up the green underwood. There is a good deal of holly still there, and some relics of the old timber, but not much. There is not shelter for deer now. But you never saw any thing like the quantity of rabbits; and there are really, here and there, some very picturesque fragments of old forest—capital studies of huge oak trees in the last stage of venerable decay and decrepitude, and very well worthy of a place in your sketch-book."

"I dare say; I should only fear my book is hardly worthy of them," said Miss Fanshawe.

"I forgot to show you this when you were here before." He stopped short, brushing aside the weeds with his walking-cane. "Here are the bases of the piers of the old park gate."

The little party stopped, and looked as people do on such old world relics. But there was more than the conventional interest; or rather something quite different; something at once sullen and pensive in the beautiful face of the

girl. She stood a little apart, looking down on that old masonry. "What is she thinking of?" he speculated; "is she sad, or is she offended? is it pride, or melancholy, or anger? or is it only the poetry of these dreamy old places that inspires her reverie? I don't think she has listened to one word I said about it. She seemed as much a stranger as the first day I met her here;" and his heart swelled with a bitter yearning, as he glanced at her without seeming to do so. And just then, with the same sad face, she stooped and plucked two pretty wild flowers that grew by the stones, under the old wall. It seemed to him like the action of a person walking in a dream—half unconscious of what she was doing, quite unconscious of every one near her.

"What shall we do?" said Cleve, as soon as they had reached the enclosure of the buildings. "Shall we begin at the refectory and library, or return to the chapel, which we had not quite looked over when you were obliged to go, on your last visit?"

This question his eyes directed to Miss Fanshawe; but as she did not so receive it, Miss Sheckleton took on herself to answer for the party. So into the chapel they went—into shadow and seclusion. Once more among the short rude columns, the epitaphs, and round arches, in dim light, and he shut the heavy door with a clap that boomed through its lonely aisles, and rejoiced in his soul at having secured if it were only ten minutes' quiet and seclusion again with the ladies of Malory. It seemed like a dream.

"I quite forgot, Miss Fanshawe," said he, artfully compelling her attention, "to show you a really curious, and even mysterious tablet, which is very old, and about which are ever so many stories and conjectures."

He conveyed them to a recess between two windows. where in the shade is a very odd mural tablet.

"It is elaborately carved, and is dated, you see, 1411. If you look near you will see that the original epitaph has been chipped off near the middle, and the word '*Eheu*,' which is Latin for 'alas!' cut deeply into the stone."

"What a hideous skull!" exclaimed the young lady, looking at the strange carving of that emblem, which projected at the summit of the tablet.

"Yes, what a diabolical expression! Isn't it?" said Cleve.

"Are not those *tears?*" continued Miss Fanshawe, curiously.

"No, look more nearly and you will see. They are worms—great worms—crawling from the eyes, and knotting themselves, as you see," answered Cleve.

"Yes," said the lady, with a slight shudder, "and what a wicked grin the artist has given to the mouth. It is wonderfully powerful! what rage and misery! It is an awful image! Is that a tongue?"

"A tongue of fire. It represents a flame issuing from between the teeth; and on the scroll beneath, which looks, you see, like parchment shriveled by fire, are the words in Latin, 'Where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched;' and here is the epitaph—'Hic sunt ruinæ, forma letifera, cor mortuum, lingua dæmonis, digitus proditor, nunc gehennæ favilla, Plorate. Plandite.' It is Latin, and the meaning is, 'Here are ruins, fatal beauty, a dead heart, the slimy tongue of the demon, a traitor finger, now ashes of gehenna, Lament. Applaud.' Some people say it is the tomb of the wicked Lady Mandeville, from whom we have the honor of being descended, who with her traitor finger indicated the place where her husband was concealed; and afterward was herself put to death, they say, though I never knew any evidence of it, by her own son. All this happened in the Castle of Cardyllian, which accounts for her being buried in the comparative seclusion of the Priory, and yet so near Cardyllian. But antiquarians say the real date of that lady's misdeings was nearly a century later; and so the matter rests an enigma, probably to the day of doom."

"It is a very good horror. What a pity we shall never know those sentences that have been cut away," said Miss Fanshawe.

"That skull is worth sketching; can you try it?" said Cleve.

"No, not for the world. I shall find it only too hard to forget it, and I don't mean to look at it again. Some countenances seize one with a tenacity and vividness quite terrible."

"Very true," said Cleve, turning away with her. "We are not rich in wonders here, but the old church chest is worth seeing, it is curiously carved."

He led them toward a niche in which it is placed, near the communion rails. But said Miss Sheckleton—

"I'm a little tired, Margaret; you will look at it, dear; and Mr. Verney will excuse me. We have been delving and hoeing all the morning, and I shall rest here for a few minutes." And she sat down on the bench.

Miss Margaret Fanshawe looked at her a little vexed, Cleve thought; and the young lady said—

"Hadn't you better come? It's *only* a step, and Mr. Verney says it is really curious."

"I'm a positive old woman," said Cousin Anne, "as you know, and really a little tired; and you take such an interest in old carving in wood—a thing I don't at all understand, Mr. Verney; she has a book quite full of really beautiful drawings, some taken at Brussels, and some at Antwerp. Go, dear, and see it, and I shall be rested by the time you come back."

So spoke good-natured Miss Sheckleton, depriving Margaret of every evasion; and she accordingly followed Cleve Verney as serenely as she might have followed the verger.

"Here it is," said Cleve, pausing before the recess in which this antique kist is placed. He glanced toward Miss Sheckleton. She was a

good way off—out of hearing, if people spoke low; and besides, busy making a pencilled note in a little book which she had brought to light. Thoughtful old soul!

"And about the way in which faces rivet the imagination and haunt the memory, I've never experienced it but once," said Cleve, in a very low tone.

"Oh, it has happened to me often, very often. From pictures, I think, always; evil expressions of countenance that are ambiguous and hard to explain, always something demoniacal, I think," said the young lady.

"There is nothing of the demon—never was, never could be—in the phantom that haunts me," said Cleve. "It is, on the contrary—I don't say angelic. Angels are very good, but not interesting. It is like an image called up by an enchanter—a wild, wonderful spirit of beauty and mystery. In darkness or light I always see it. You like to escape from yours. I would not lose mine for worlds; it is my good genius, my inspiration; and whenever that image melts into air, and I see it no more, the last good principle of my life will have perished."

The young lady laughed in a silvery little cadence that had a sadness in it, and said—

"Your superstitions are much prettier than mine. My good Cousin Anne, there, talks of blue devils, and my familiars are, I think, of that vulgar troop; while yours are all *couleur de rose*, and so elegantly got up, and so perfectly presentable and well-bred, that I really think I should grow quite tired of the best of them in a five minutes' *tête-à-tête*."

"I must have described my apparition very badly," said Cleve. "That which is lovely beyond all mortal parallel can be described only by its effects upon your fancy and emotions, and in proportion as these are intense, I believe they are incommunicable."

"You are growing quite too metaphysical for me," said Miss Margaret Fanshawe. "I respect metaphysics, but I never could understand them."

"It is quite true," laughed Cleve. "I *was* so. I hate metaphysics myself; and they have nothing to do with this, they are so dry and detestable. But, now, as a physician—as an exorcist—tell me, I entreat, in my sad case, haunted by a beautiful phantom of despair, which I have mistaken for my good angel, how am I to redeem myself from this fatal spell."

A brilliant color tinged the young lady's cheeks, and her great eyes glanced on him for a moment, he thought, with a haughty and even angry brilliancy.

"I don't profess the arts you mention; but I doubt the reality of your spectre. I think it is an *illusion*, depending on an undue excitement in the organ of self-esteem, quite to be dispelled by restoring the healthy action of those other organs—of common sense. Seriously, I'm not competent to advise gentlemen, young or old, in their difficulties, real or fancied; but I certainly would say to any one who had set before him an object of ambition, the attainment of which he thought would be injurious to him,—be manly, have done with it, let it go, give it to the winds. Besides, you know that half the objects which young men place before them, the ambitions which they cherish, are the merest castles in the air, and that all but themselves can see the ridicule of their aspirations."

"You must not go, Miss Fanshawe; you have not seen the carving you came here to look at. Here is the old church chest; but—but suppose the *patient*—let us call him—knows that the object of his—his *ambition* is on all accounts the best and noblest he could possibly have set before him. What then?"

"What then!" echoed Miss Fanshawe. "How can any one possibly tell—but the patient, as you call him, himself—what he should do. Your patient does not interest me; he wearies me. Let us look at this carving."

"Do you think he should despair because there is no present answer to his prayers, and his idol vouchsafes no sign or omen?" persisted Cleve.

"I don't think," she replied with a cold impatience, "the kind of person you describe is capable of despairing in such a case. I think he would place too high a value upon his merits to question the certainty of their success—don't you?" said the young lady.

"Well, no; I *don't* think so. He is not an unreal person; I know him, and I know that his good opinion of himself is humbled, and that he adores with an entire abandonment of self the being whom he literally worships."

"Very adoring, perhaps, but rather—that's a great dog like a wolf-hound in that panel, and it has got its fangs in that pretty stag's throat," said Miss Fanshawe, breaking into a criticism upon the carving.

"Yes—but you were saying 'Very adoring, but rather'—what?" urged Cleve.

"Rather silly, don't you think? What business have people adoring others of whom they know nothing—who may not even like *them*—who may possibly *dis*like them extremely? I am tired of your good genius. I hope I'm not very rude—and of your friend's folly—tired as *you* must be; and I think we should both give him very much the same advice. *I* should say to him, pray don't sacrifice yourself; you are much too precious; consider your own value, and above all remember that even should you make up your mind to the humiliation of the altar and the knife, the ceremonial may prove a fruitless mortification, and the opportunity of accomplishing your sacrifice be denied you by your divinity. And I think that's a rather well-rounded period: don't you?"

By this time Miss Margaret Fanshawe had reached her cousin, who stood up smiling.

"I'm ashamed to say I have been actually amusing myself here with my accounts. We have seen, I think, nearly every thing now in this building. I should so like to visit the ruins at the other side of the court-yard."

"I shall be only too happy to be your guide, if you permit me," said Cleve.

And accordingly they left the church, and Cleve shut the door with a strange feeling both of irritation and anxiety.

"Does she dislike me? Or is she engaged? What can her odd speeches mean, if not one or other of these things? She warns me off, and seems positively angry at my approach. She took care that I should quite understand her ironies, and there was no mistaking the reality of her unaccountable resentment."

So it was with a weight at his heart, the like of which he had never experienced before, that Cleve undertook, and I fear in a rather spiritless way performed his duty as cicerone, over the other parts of the building.

Her manner seemed to him changed, chilled, and haughty. Had there come a secret and sudden antipathy, the consequence of a too hasty revelation of feelings which he ought in prudence to have kept to himself for some time longer? And again came with a dreadful pang, the thought that her heart was already won—the heart so cold and impenetrable to him—the passionate and docile worshiper of another man—some beast—some fool. But the first love—the only love worth having; and yet, of all loves the most ignorant—the insanest.

Bitter as gall was the outrage to his pride. He would have liked to appear quite indifferent, but he could not. He knew the girl would penetrate his finesse. She practiced none herself; he could see and feel a change that galled him—very slight but intolerable. Would it not be a further humiliation to be less frank than she, and to practice an affectation which she despised.

Miss Sheckleton eyed the young people stealthily and curiously now and then, he thought. She suspected perhaps more than there really was, and she was particularly kind and grave at parting, and he thought, observed him with a sort of romantic compassion which is so pretty in old ladies.

He did touch Miss Fanshawe's hand at parting, and she smiled a cold and transient smile as she gathered her cloaks about her, and looked over the sea, toward the setting sun. In that clear, mellow glory, how wonderfully beautiful she looked! He was angry with himself for the sort of adoration which glowed at his heart. What would he not have given to be indifferent, and to make her feel that he was so!

He smiled and waved his farewell to Miss Sheckleton. Miss Fanshawe was now looking toward Malory. The boat was gliding swiftly into distance, and disappeared with the sunset glittering on its sides, round the little headland, and Cleve was left alone.

His eyes dropped to the shingle, and broken shells, and sea-weed, that shone beneath his feet, in that level stream of amber light. He thought of going away, thought what a fool he had been, thought of futurity and fate, with a sigh, and renounced the girl, washed out the portrait before which he had worshiped for so long, with the hand of defiance—the water of Lethe. Vain, vain; in sympathetic dyes, the shadow stained upon the brain still fills his retina, glides before him, in light and shadow, and will not be divorced.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CLEVE AGAIN BEFORE HIS IDOL.

Cleve could not rest—he could not return to Ware. He would hear his fate defined by her who had grown so inexpressibly dear by being unattainable! Intolerant of impediment or delay, this impetuous spirit would end all and know all, that very night.

The night had come—one that might have come in June. The moon was up—the air so sweetly soft—the blue of heaven so deep and liquid.

His yacht lay on the deep quiet shadow, under the pier of Cardyllian. He walked over the moon-lighted green, which was now quite deserted. The early town had already had its tea and "pikelets." Alone—if lovers ever are alone—he walked along the shore, and heard the gentle sea ripple rush and sigh along the stones. He ascended the steep path that mounts the sea-beaten heights, overlooking Cardyllian on one side, and Malory on the other.

Before him lay the landscape on which he had gazed as the sun went down that evening, when the reflected light from the gold and crimson sky fell softly round. And now, how changed every thing! The moon's broad disk over the headland was silvering the objects dimly. The ivied castle at his left looked black against the sky. The ruins, how empty now! How beautiful every thing, and he how prodigious a fool! No matter. We have time enough to be wise. Away, to-morrow, or at latest, next day; and in due course would arrive the season—that tiresome House of Commons—and the routine of pleasure, grown on a sudden so insupportably dull.

So he had his walk in the moonlight toward Malory—the softest moonlight that ever fell from heaven—the air so still and sweet: it seemed an enchanted land. Down the hill toward Malory he sauntered, looking sometimes moonward, sometimes on the dark woods, and feeling as five weeks since he could not have believed himself capable of feeling, and so he arrived at the very gate of Malory.

Here stood two ladies, talking low their desultory comments on the beautiful scene, as they looked across the water toward the headland of Pendillion. And these two ladies were the same from whom he had parted so few hours since. It was still very early everywhere except at Cardyllian, and these precincts of Malory, so entirely deserted at these hours that there seemed as little chance of interruption at the gate, as if they had stood in the drawing-room windows.

Cleve was under too intense and impetuous an excitement to hesitate. He approached the iron gate where, as at a convent grille, the old and the young recluse stood. The moonlight was of that intense and brilliant kind which defines objects clearly as day-light. The ladies looked both surprised; even Miss Anne Sheckleton looked grave.

"How very fortunate!" said Cleve, raising his hat, and drawing near. Just then he did not care whether Sir Booth should chance to see him there or not, and it was not the turn of his mind to think, in the first place, of consequences to other people.

Happily, perhaps, for the quiet of Malory, one of Sir Booth's caprices had dispensed that night with his boat, and he was at that moment stretched in his long silk dressing-gown and slippers, on the sofa, in what he called his study. After the first instinctive alarm, therefore, Miss Anne Sheckleton had quite recovered her accustomed serenity and cheer of mind, and even interrupted him, before he had well got to the end of his salutation, to exclaim—

"Did you ever, anywhere, see such moonlight? It almost dazzles me."

"Quite splendid; and Malory looks so picturesque in this light." He was leaning on the pretty old gate, at which stood both ladies, sufficiently far apart to enable him, in a low tone, to say to the younger, without being overheard —"So interesting in every light, now! I wonder your men don't suspect me of being a poacher, or something else very bad, I find myself prowling about here so often, at this hour, and even later."

"I admire that great headland—Pendillion, isn't it?—so very much; by this light one might fancy it white with snow," said Miss Sheckleton.

"I wish you could see Cardrwydd Island *now;* the gray cliffs in this light are so white and transparent, you can hardly imagine so strange and beautiful an effect," said Cleve.

"I dare say," said Miss Sheckleton.

"You have only to walk about twenty steps across that little road toward the sea, and you have it full in view. Do let me persuade you," said Cleve.

"Well, I don't mind," said Miss Sheckleton. "Come, Margaret, dear," and these latter words she repeated in private exhortation, and then aloud she added—"We have grown so much into the habit of shutting ourselves up in our convent grounds, that we feel like a pair of runaway nuns whenever we pass the walls; however, I *must* see the island."

The twenty steps toward the sea came to be a hundred or more, and at last brought them close under the rude rocks that form the little pier; in that place the party stopped, and saw the island, rising in the distant sheen, white and filmy; a phantom island, with now and then a gleam of silvery spray, from the swell which was unfelt within the estuary, shooting suddenly across its points of shadow.

"Oh! how beautiful!" exclaimed Miss Fanshawe, and Cleve felt strangely elated in her applause. They were all silent, and Miss Sheckleton, still gazing on the distant cliffs, walked on a little, and a little more, and paused.

"How beautiful!" echoed Cleve, in tones as low, but very different. "Yes, how beautiful —how fatally beautiful; how beloved, and yet how cold. Cold, mysterious, wild as the sea; beautiful, adored and *cruel.* How *could* you speak as you did to-day? What have I done, or said, or thought, if you could read my thoughts? I tell you, ever since I saw you in Cardyllian Church I've thought only of you; you haunt my steps; you inspire my hopes; I adore you, Margaret."

She was looking on him with parted lips, and something like fear in her large eyes, and how beautiful her features were in the brilliant moonlight.

"Yes, I *adore* you; I don't know what fate or fiend rules these things; but to-day it seemed to me that you hated me, and yet I adore you; *do* you hate me?"

"How wildly you talk; you can't love me; you don't know me," said this odd girl.

"I don't know you, and yet I love you; you don't know *me*, and yet I think you *hate* me. You talk of love as if it were a creation of reason and calculation. You don't know it, or you could not speak so; antipathies perhaps you do experience; is there no caprice in *them?* I love you *in defiance* of calculation, and of reason, and of hope itself. I can no more help loving you than the light and air without which I should die. You're not going; you're not *so* cruel; it may be the last time you shall ever hear me speak. You won't believe me; no, not a word I say, although it's all as true as that this light shines from heaven. You'd believe one of your boatmen relating any nonsense he pleases about people and places here. You'll believe worse fellows, I dare say, speaking of higher and dearer things, *perhaps*—I can't tell; but *me*, on *this*, upon which I tell you *all* depends for me, you won't believe. I never loved any mortal before. I did not know what it was, and now here I stand, telling you my bitter story, telling it to the sea, and the rocks, and the air, with as good a chance of a hearing. I read it in your manner and your words to-day. I felt it intuitively; you don't care for me; you can't like me; I see it in your looks. And now, will you tell me—for God's sake, Margaret, do tell me—is there not some one—some one you *do* like? I know there is."

"That's *quite* untrue—I mean there is *nothing* of the kind," said this young lady, looking very pale, with great flashing eyes, "and one word more of this kind to-night you are not to say to me. Cousin Anne," she called, "come, I'm going back."

"We are so much obliged to you, Mr. Verney," said Miss Sheckleton, returning; "we should never have thought of coming down

here, to look for this charming view; come, Margaret, darling, your papa may want me."

An inquisitive glance she darted furtively at the young people, and I dare say she thought that she saw something unusual in their countenances.

As *they* did not speak, Miss Sheckleton chatted on unheeded, till, on a sudden, Cleve interposed with—

"There's an old person—an old lady, I may call her—named Rebecca Mervyn, who lives in the steward's house, adjoining Malory, for whom I have a very old friendship; she was so kind to me, poor thing, when I was a boy. My grandmother has a very high opinion of her; and *she* was never very easily pleased. I suppose you have seen Mrs. Mervyn; you'd not easily forget her, if you have. They tell me in the town that she is quite well; the same odd creature she always was, and living still in the steward's house."

"I know—to be sure—I've seen her very often—that is, half a dozen times or more—and she *is* a very odd old woman, like that benevolent enchantress in the 'Magic Ring'—don't you remember? who lived in the castle with white lilies growing all round the battlements," answered Miss Sheckleton.

"I know," said Cleve, who had never read it.

"And if you want to see her, *here* she is, oddly enough," whispered Miss Sheckleton, as the old woman with whom Sedley had conferred on the sea-beach came round the corner of the boundary wall near the gateway by which they were now standing, in her gray cloak, with dejected steps, and looking, after her wont, seaward toward Pendillion.

"No," said Cleve, getting up a smile as he drew a little back into the shadow; "I'll not speak to her now; I should have so many questions to answer, I should not get away from her for an hour."

Almost as he spoke the old woman passed them, and entered the gate; as she did so, looking hard on the little party, and hesitating for a moment, as if she would have stopped outright. But she went on without any farther sign.

"I breathe again," said Cleve; "I was so afraid she would know me again, and insist on a talk."

"Well, perhaps it is better she did not; it might not do, you know, if she mentioned your name, for *reasons*," whispered Miss Sheckleton, who was on a sudden much more intimate with Cleve, much more friendly, much more kind, and somehow pitying.

So he bade good-night. Miss Sheckleton gave him a little friendly pressure as they shook hands at parting. Miss Fanshawe neither gave nor refused her hand. He took it; he held it for a moment—that slender hand, all the world to him, clasped in his own, yet never to be his, lodged like a stranger's for a moment there—then to go forever. The hand was carelessly drawn away; he let it go, and never a word spoke he.

The ladies entered the deep shadow of the trees. He listened to the light steps fainting into silent distance, till he could hear them no more.

Suspense—still suspense.

Those words spoken in her clear undertone—terrible words, that seemed at the moment to thunder in his ears, "loud as a trumpet with a silver sound"—were they, after all, words of despair, or words of hope?

"*One word more of this kind to-night you are not to say to me.*"

How was he to translate the word "to-night" in this awful text? It seemed, as she spoke it, introduced simply to add peremptoriness to her forbiddance. But was that its fair meaning? Did it not imply that the prohibition was limited only to that night? Might it not mean that he was free to speak more—possibly to her more—at a future time?

A riddle? Well he would read it in the way most favorable to his hopes; and who will blame him? He would have no oracles—no ambiguities—nothing but sharply defined certainty.

With an insolent spirit, instinct with an impatience and impetuosity utterly intolerant of the least delay or obstruction, the interval could not be long.

CHAPTER XIX.

CLEVE VERNEY TAKES A BOLD STEP.

When we seek danger he is sometimes like death—hard to find. Cleve would not have disliked an encounter with Sir Booth Fanshawe, who could tell what might come of such a meeting? It was palpably so much the interest of that ruined gentleman to promote his wishes, that, if he would only command his temper and listen to reason, he had little doubt of enlisting him zealously in his favor. It was his own uncle who always appeared to him the really formidable obstacle.

Therefore, next night, Cleve fearlessly walked down to Malory. It was seven o'clock, and dark. It was a still, soft night. The moon rose up yet, and all within the gate dark as Erebus—silent, also, except for the fall of a dry leaf now and then, rustling sadly through the boughs.

At the gate for a moment he hesitated, and then with a sudden decision pushed it open, entered, and the darkness received him. A little confused were his thoughts and feelings as he strode through that darkness and silence toward the old house. So dark it was, that to direct his steps he had to look up for a streak of sky between the nearly meeting branches of the trees.

This trespass was not a premeditated outrage. It was a sudden inspiration of despair. He had thought of writing to Sir Booth. But to what mischief might not that fierce and impracticable old man apply his overt act? Suppose he were to send his letter on to the Hon. Kiffyn Pulke

Verney? In that case Mr. Cleve Verney might moralize with an income of precisely two hundred a year, for the rest of his days, upon the transitory nature of all human greatness. At the next election he would say a compulsory farewell to the House. He owed too much money to remain pleasantly in England, his incensed uncle would be quite certain to marry, and with Cleve Verney—ex-M.P., and quondam man of promise, and presumptive Earl of Verney—*conclamatum foret.*

He had therefore come to the gate of Malory in the hope of some such happy chance as befell the night before. And now disappointed, he broke through all considerations, and was walking, in a sort of desperation, right into the lion's mouth.

He slackened his pace, however, and bethought him. Of course, he could not ask at this hour to see Miss Anne Sheckleton. Should he go and pay a visit to old Rebecca Mervyn? Hour and circumstances considered, would not that also be a liberty and an outrage? What would they think of it? What would *he* say of it in another fellow's case? Was he then going at this hour to pay his respects to Sir Booth Fanshawe, whom he had last seen and heard in the thunder and dust of the hustings, hurling language and grammar that were awful at his head?

Cleve Verney was glad that he had pulled up before he stood upon the door steps; and he felt like an awakened somnambulist.

"I *can't* do this. It's *impossible.* What a brute I am growing," thought Cleve, awaking to realities. "There's nothing for it, I believe, but patience. If I were now to press for an answer, she would say 'No'; and were I to ask admission at the house at this hour, what would she —what would Miss Sheckleton, even, think of me? If I had nerve to go away and forget her, I should be happier—quite happy and quite good for nothing, and perfectly at my uncle's disposal. As it is, I'm *miserable*—a miserable *fool.* Every thing against it—even the girl, I believe; and I here—partly in a vision of paradise, partly in the torments of the damned, wasting my life in the dream of an opium-eater, and without power to break from it, and see the world as it is."

He was leaning with folded arms, like the melancholy Jacques, against the trunk of a forest tree, as this sad soliloquy glided through his mind, and he heard a measured step approaching slowly from the house.

"This is Sir Booth coming," thought he, with a strange, sardonic gladness. "We shall see what will come of it. Let us hear the old gentleman, by all means."

The step was still distant.

It would have been easy for him to retrace his steps, and to avoid the encounter. But it seemed to him that to stir would have been like moving a mountain, and a sort of cold defiance kept him there, and an unspeakable interest in the story which he was enacting, and a longing to turn over the leaf, and read the next decisive page. So he waited.

His conjecture was right, but the anticipated dialogue did not occur. The tall figure of Sir Booth appeared; some wrappers thrown across his arm. He stalked on and passed by Cleve, without observing, or rather, seeing him; for his eye had not grown like Cleve's, accustomed to the darkness.

Cleve stood where he was till the step was lost in silence, and waited for some time longer, and heard Sir Booth's voice, as he supposed, hailing the boatmen from that solitary shore, and theirs replying, and he thought of the ghostly boat and boatmen that used to scare him in the "Tale of Wonder" beloved in his boyhood. For any thing that remains to him in life, for any retrospect but one of remorse, he might as well be one of those phantom boatmen on the haunted lake. By this time he is gliding, in the silence of his secret thoughts, upon the dark sea outside Malory.

"Well!" thought Cleve, with a sudden inspiration, "he will not return for two hours at least. I *will* go on—no great harm in merely passing the house—and we shall see whether any thing turns up."

On went Cleve. The approach to the old house is not a very long one. On a sudden, through the boughs, the sight of lighted windows met his eyes, and through the open sash of one of them, he heard faintly the pleasant sound of female prattle.

He drew nearer. He stood upon the esplanade before the steps, under the well-known gray front of the old house. A shadow crossed the window, and he heard Miss Anne Sheckleton's merry voice speaking volubly, and then a little silence, of which he availed himself to walk with as distinct a tread as he could manage, at a little distance, in front of the windows, in the hope of exciting the attention of the inmates. He succeeded; for almost at the instant two shadowy ladies, the lights being within the room, and hardly any from without, appeared at the open window; Miss Sheckleton was in front, and Miss Fanshawe with her hand leaning upon her old cousin's shoulder, looked out also.

Cleve stopped instantly, and approached, raising his hat. This young gentleman was also a mere dark outline, and much less distinct than those he recognized against the cheery light of the drawing-room candles. But I don't think there was a moment's doubt about his identity.

"Here I am, actually detected, trying to glide by unperceived," said Cleve, lying, as *Mr. Fag* says in the play, and coming up quickly to the open window. "You must think me quite mad, or the most impudent person alive; but what am I to do? I can't leave Ware, without paying old Rebecca—Mrs. Mervyn, you know—a visit. Lady Verney blows me up so awfully about it, and has put it on me as a duty. She thinks there's no one like old Rebecca; and really poor old Mervyn was always very kind to me when I was a boy. She lives, you know,

in the steward's house. I can't come up here in day-light. I'm in such a dilemma. I must wait till Sir Booth has gone out in his boat, don't you see? and so I did; and if I had just got round the corner there, without your observing me, I should have been all right. I'm really quite ashamed. I must look so like a trespasser—a poacher—every thing that is suspicious; but the case, you see, is really so difficult. I've told you every thing, and I do hope you quite acquit me."

"Oh, yes," said Miss Sheckleton. "We *must*, you know. It's like a piece of a Spanish comedy; but what's to be done? You must have been very near meeting. Booth has only just gone down to the boat."

"We did meet—that is, he actually passed me by, but without seeing me. I heard him coming, and just stood, taking my chance; it was very dark, you know."

"Well, I forgive you," said Miss Sheckleton. "I must, you know; but the dogs won't. You hear them in the yard. What good, dear creatures they are; and when they hear us talking to you, they'll grow quite quiet and understand that all is well, they are *so* intelligent. And there's the boat; look, Margaret, through *that* opening, you can just see it. When the moon gets up, it looks so pretty. I suppose it's my bad taste, but those clumsy fishing boats seem to me so much more picturesque than your natty yachts, though, of course, *they* are very nice in their way. Do you hear how *furious* you have made our great dog, poor old Neptune! He looks upon us, Margaret and I, as in his special charge; but it does not do, making such an uproar."

I fancy she was thinking of Sir Booth, for she glanced toward the boat; and perhaps the kind old lady was thinking of somebody else, also.

"I'll just run to the back window, and quiet him. I shan't be away a moment, Margaret, dear."

And away went Miss Sheckleton, shutting the door. Miss Fanshawe had not said a word, but remained at the window looking out. You might have thought his being there, or not, a matter of entire indifference to her. She had not said a word. She looked toward the point at which the rising splendor of the moon was already visible over the distant hills.

"Did you miss any thing—I'm sure you did—yesterday? I found a pin at the jetty of Penruthyn. It is so pretty, I've been ever so much tempted to keep it; so very pretty, that somehow, I think it could not have belonged to any one but to you."

And he took the trinket from his waistcoat pocket.

"Oh! I'm so glad," said she; "I thought I had seen it this morning, and could not think what had become of it. I never missed it till this evening."

He touched the fingers she extended to receive it. He took them in his hand, and held them with a gentle force.

"For one moment allow me to hold your hand; don't take it from me yet. I implore, only while I say a few words, which you may make, almost by a look, a farewell—my eternal farewell. Margaret, I love you as no other man ever will love you. You think all this but the madness that young men talk. I know nothing of them. What I say is desperately true, no madness, but sad and irreparable reality. I never knew love but for you—and for you it is such idolatry as I think the world never imagined. You are never for one moment from my thoughts. Every good hope or thought I have, I owe to you. You are the good principle of my life, and if I lose you, I am lost myself."

This strange girl was not a conventional young lady. I don't pronounce whether she was better or worse for that. She did not drop her eyes, nor yet withdraw her hand. She left that priceless pledge in his, it seemed, unconsciously, and with eyes of melancholy and earnest inquiry, looked on the handsome young man that was pleading with her.

"It is strange," she said in a dreamy tone, as if talking with herself. "I said it was strange, for he does not, and can not know me."

"Yes," he answered, "I do know you—intuitively I know you. We have all faith in the beautiful. We can not separate the beautiful and the good; they come both direct from God, they resemble him; and I know your power—you can make of me what you will. Oh, Margaret, will you shut me out forever from the only chance of good I shall ever know? Can you ever, ever like me?"

There was a little silence, and she said, very low, "If I *were* to like you, would you love me better than any thing else in all the world?"

"Than all the world—than all the world," he reiterated, and she felt the hand of this young man of fashion, of ambition, who had years ago learned to sneer at all romance, quiver as it held her own.

"But first, if I were to allow any one to like me, I would say to him you must know what you undertake. You must love me with your entire heart; heart and soul, you must give yourself altogether up to me. I must be every thing to you—your present, your future, your happiness, your hope; for I will not bear to share your heart with any thing on *earth!* and these are hard terms, but the only ones."

"I need make *no* vow, darling—*darling*. My life is what you describe, and I can not help it; I adore you. Oh! Margaret, *can* you like me?"

Then Margaret Fanshawe answered, and in a tone the most sad, I think, that ever spoke; and to *him*, the sweetest and most solemn; like distant music in the night, funereal and plaintive, the cadences fell upon his entranced ear.

"If I were to say I could like *you enough to wait*, and *try* if I could like you more, it always seemed to me so awful a thing—try if I could like you more—would not the terms seem to you too hard?"

"Oh! Margaret, darling, say you *can* like me

now. You know how I adore you," he implored.

"Here, then, is the truth. I do not like you well enough to say all that; no, I do *not*, but I like you too well to say *go*. I don't know how it *may* be, but if you choose to wait, and give me a very little time to resolve, I shall see clearly, and all uncertainty come to an end, *somehow*, and God guide us all to good! That is the whole truth, Mr. Verney; and pray say no more at present. You shall not wait long for my answer."

"I agree, darling. I accept your terms. You don't know what delay is to me; but any thing rather than despair."

She drew her hand to herself. He released it. It was past all foolish by-play with him, and the weight of a strange fear lay upon his heart.

This little scene took longer in speaking and acting than it does in reading in this poor note of mine. When they looked up, the moon was silvering the tops of the trees, and the distant edges of the Welsh mountains, and glimmering and flashing to and fro, like strings of diamonds, on the water.

And now Miss Anne Sheckleton entered, having talked old Neptune into good-humor.

"Is there a chance of your visiting Penruthyn again?" asked Cleve, as if nothing unusual had passed. "You have not seen the old park. *Pray*, come to-morrow."

Miss Sheckleton looked at the young lady, but she made no sign.

"*Shall* we? *I* see nothing against it," said she.

"Oh! *do*. I entreat," he persisted.

"Well, if it should be fine, and if nothing prevents, I think, I may say, we *will*, about three o'clock to-morrow."

Margaret did not speak; but was there not something sad and even gentle in her parting? The old enigma was still troubling his brain and heart, as he walked down the dark avenue once more. How would it all end? How would she at last pronounce?

The walk, next day, was taken in the Warren, as he had proposed. I believe it was a charming excursion; as happy, too, as under the bitter conditions of suspense it could be; but nothing worthy of record was spoken, and matters, I dare say, remained, ostensibly at least, precisely as they were.

CHAPTER XX.

HIS FATE.

Cleve Verney, as we know, was a young gentleman in whose character were oddly mingled impetuosity and caution. A certain diplomatic reserve and slyness had often stood him in stead in the small strategy of life, and here, how skillfully had he not managed his visits to Penruthyn, and hid from the poering eyes of Cardyllian his walks and loiterings about the enchanted woods of Malory.

Visiting good Mrs. Jones's shop next day, to ask her how she did, and gossip a little across the counter, that lady peering over her spectacles, received him with a particularly sly smile, which, being prone to alarms just then, he noted and did not like.

Confidential and voluble as usual, was this lady, bringing her black lace cap and purple ribbons close to the brim of Mr. Verney's hat, as she leaned over the counter, and murmured her emphatic intelligence and surmises deliberately in his ear. She came at last to say—

"You must be very *solitary*, we all think, over there, at Ware, sir; and though you have your yacht to sail across in, and your dog-cart to trot along, and doesn't much mind, still it is not con*venient*, you know, for one that likes *this* side so much better than the other. We think, and *wonders*, we all do, you wouldn't stay awhile at the Verney Arms, over the way, and remain among us, you know, and be near every thing you might like; the other side, you know, is very dull; we can't deny *that*, though it's quite true that Ware is a very fine place—a really *beau*tiful place—but it *is* lonely, we must allow; *mustn't* we?"

"Awfully lonely," acquiesced Cleve, "but I don't quite see why I should live at the Verney Arms, notwithstanding."

"Well, they do say—you mustn't be angry with them, you know—but they do, that you like a walk to Malory," and this was accompanied with a wonderfully cunning look, and a curious play of the crow's-feet and wrinkles of her fat face, and a sly, gentle laugh. "But *I* don't mind."

"Don't mind *what?*" asked Cleve, a little sharply.

"*Well*, I don't mind what they *say*, but they *do* say you have made acquaintance with the Malory family—no harm in that, you know."

"No harm in the world, only a lie," said Cleve, with a laugh that was not quite enjoying. "I wish they would manage that introduction for me; I should like it extremely. I think the young lady rather pretty—don't you? and I should not object to pay my respects, if you think it would not be odd. My Cardyllian friends know so much better than I what is the right thing to do. That fact is, I don't know one of our own tenants there, except for taking off my hat twice to the only sane one of the party, that old Miss Anne—Anne—*something*—you told me—"

"*Sheckleton* that will *be*," supplemented Mrs. Jones.

"Sheckleton. Very well; and my real difficulty is this—and upon my honor, I don't know how to manage it. My grandmother, Lady Verney, puts me under orders—and you know she does not like to be disobeyed—to go and see poor old Rebecca, Mrs. Mervyn, you know, at the steward's house, at Malory; and I am looking for a moment when these people are out

of the way, just to run in for five minutes, and ask her how she does. And my friend, Wynne Williams, won't let me tell Lady Verney how odd these people are, he's so afraid of her hearing the rumor of their being mad. But the fact is, whenever I go up there and peep in through the trees, I see some of them about the front of the house, and I can't go up to the door, of course, without annoying them, for they wish to be quite shut up; and the end of it is, I say, that, among them, I shall get blown up by Lady Verney, and shan't know what to answer—by Jove! But you may tell my friends in Cardyllian, I am so much obliged to them for giving me credit for more cleverness than *they* have had in effecting an introduction; and talking of me about that pretty girl, Miss—oh!—what's her name?—at Malory. I only hope she's not mad; for if she is, *I* must be also."

Mrs. Jones listened and looked at him more gravely, for his story hung pretty well together, and something of its cunning died out of the expression of her broad face. But Cleve walked away a little disconcerted, and by no means in a pleasant temper with his good neighbors of Cardyllian; and made that day a long visit at Hazelden, taking care to make his approaches as ostentatiously as he could. And he was seen for an hour in the evening, walking on the green with the young ladies of that house, Miss Charity flanking the little line of march on one side, and he the other, pretty Miss Agnes, of the golden locks, the pretty dimples, and brilliant tints, walking between, and listening, I'm afraid, more to the unphilosophic prattle of young Mr. Verney, than to the sage conversation, and even admonitions and reminders of her kind, but unexceptionable sister.

From the news-room windows, from the great bow-window of the billiard-room, this promenade was visible. It was a judicious demonstration, and gave a new twist to conjecture; and listless gentlemen who chronicled and discussed such matters, observed upon it, each according to his modicum of cloquence and wisdom.

Old Vane Etherage, whose temperament, though squally, was placable, was won by the frank courtesy and adroit flatteries of the artless young fellow who had canvassed boroughs and counties, and was master of a psychology of which honest old Etherage knew nothing.

That night, notwithstanding, Cleve was at the gate of Malory, and the two ladies were there.

"We have been looking at the boat ten minutes, just, since it left. Sir Booth is out as usual, and now see how far away; you can scarcely see the sail, and yet so little breeze."

"The breeze is rather from the shore, and you are sheltered here, all this old wood, you know. But you can hear it a little in the tops of the trees," Cleve answered, caring very little what way the breeze might blow, and yet glad to know that Sir Booth was on his cruise, and quite out of the way for more than an hour to come.

"We intended venturing out as far as the pier, there to enjoy once more that beautiful moonlight view, but Sir Booth went out to-night by the little door down there, and this has been left with its padlock on. So we must only treat this little recess as the convent parlor, with the grating here, at which we parley with our friends. *Do* you hear that foolish old dog again! I really believe he has got out of the yard," suddenly exclaimed good-natured Miss Anne, who made the irregularities of old Neptune an excuse for trifling absences very precious to Cleve Verney.

So now, she walked some ten or twenty steps toward the house, and stood there looking up the avenue, and prattling incessantly, though Cleve could not hear a word she said, except now and then the name of "Neptune," when she ineffectually accosted that remote offender.

"You have not said a word, Miss Fanshawe; you are not offended with me, I hope," he murmured.

"Oh, no."

"You have not shaken hands," he continued, and he put his hand between the bars, "may I you?"

So she placed hers in his.

"And now, can you tell me nothing?"

"I've been thinking that I may as well speak now," she said, in very low tones. "There must be uncertainty, I believe, in all things, and faith in those who love us, and trust that all may end in good; and so, *blindly*—almost blindly—I say, yes, if you will promise me—oh! *promise*, that you will always love me, as you do now, and never change. If you love me, I shall love you, *always*; and if you change, I shall *die*. Oh! won't you promise?"

Poor fluttering heart! The bird that prunes its wing for the untried flight over the sea, in which to tire is to die, lonely, in the cold waste, may feel within its little breast the instinct of that irrevocable venture, the irresistible impulse, the far-off hope, the present fear and danger, as she did.

Promises! What are they? Who can answer for the follies of the heart, and the mutations of time? We know what we are; we know what we may be. Idlest of all idle words are these promises for the affections, for the raptures and illusions, utterly mortal, whose duration God has placed quite beyond our control. Kill them, indeed, we may, but add one hour to their uncertain lives, never.

Poor trembling heart! "Promise never to change. Oh! won't you promise?" Promises spoken to the air, written in dust—yet a word, a look, like a blessing or a hope—ever so illusive, before the wing is spread, and the long and untried journey begins!

What Cleve Verney swore, and all the music he poured into those little listening ears in that enchanting hour, I know not.

Miss Anne Sheckleton came back. Through the convent bars Cleve took her hand, in a kind

of agitation, a kind of tumult, with rapture in his handsome face, and just said, "She has told me, she *will*," and Miss Sheckleton said nothing, but put her arms round Margaret's neck, and kissed her many times, and holding her hand, looked up smiling, and took Cleve's also, and in the old spinster's eyes were glittering those diamond tears, so pure and unselfish that, when we see them, we think of those that angels are said to weep over the sorrows and the vanities of human life.

Swiftly flew the hour, and not till the sail was nearing the shore, and the voices of the boatmen were audible across the water, did the good old lady insist on a final farewell, and Cleve glided away, under the shadow of the trees that overhang the road, and disappeared round the distant angle of the wall of Malory.

CHAPTER XXI.

CAPTAIN SHRAPNELL.

THE next afternoon Miss Charity Etherage and her sister Agnes were joined in their accustomed walk upon the green of Cardyllian by Captain Shrapnell, a jaunty half-pay officer of five-and-fifty, who represented to his own satisfaction the resident youth and fashion of that quiet watering-place.

"I give you my honor, Miss Etherage," said he, placing himself beside Miss Agnes, "I mistook you yesterday for Lady Fanny Mersey. Charming person she is, and I need not say, perfectly lovely." A little arch bow gave its proper point to the compliment. "She has gone, however, I understand, left Lluinan yesterday. Is that young Verney's boat? No, oh! no—nothing like so sharp. He's a very nice fellow, young Verney."

This was put rather interrogatively, and Miss Agnes, thinking that she had blushed a little, blushed more, to her inexpressible chagrin, for she knew that Captain Shrapnell was watching her with the interest of a gossip.

"Nice? I dare say. But I really know him so very slightly," said Miss Agnes.

"Come, come; that won't do," said the Captain, very archly. "You forget that I was sitting in our club window yesterday evening, when a certain party were walking up and down. Ha, ha, you do. We're tolerably clear-sighted up there, and old Rogers keeps our windows rubbed; and the glass is quite brilliantly transparent, ha, ha, ha! hey?"

"I think your windows are made of multiplying glasses, and magnifying glasses, and every kind of glass that distorts and discolors," said Miss Agnes, a little pettishly. "I don't know how else it is that you all see such wonderful sights as you do, through them."

"Well, they *do*, certainly. Some of our friends do color a little," said the Captain, with a waggish yet friendly grin, up at the great bow window. "But in this case, you'll allow there was no great opportunity for color, the tints of nature are so beautiful," and Shrapnell fired off this little saying, with his bow and smile of fascination. "Nor, by Jove, for the multiplying glasses either, for more than three in that party would have quite spoiled it; now *wouldn't* it, hey? ha, ha, ha! The two principals, and a gooseberry, eh? Ha, ha, ha!"

"What *is* a *gooseberry?*" inquired Miss Charity, peremptorily.

"A delightful object in the garden, Miss Etherage, a delightful object everywhere. The delight of the young especially, hey, Miss Agnes? ha, ha! hey? and one of the sweetest products of nature. Eh, Miss Agnes, ha, ha, ha! Miss Etherage, I give you my honor every word I say is true."

"I do declare, Captain Shrapnell, it seems to me you have gone *perfectly mad!*" said Miss Charity, who was outspoken and emphatic.

"Always a mad fellow, Miss Etherage, ha, ha, ha! Very true; that's my character, hey? ha, ha, ha, egad! So the ladies tell me," said the gay young captain. "Wish I had a guinea for every time they've called me mad, among them. I give you my honor I'd be a rich fellow this moment."

"Now, Captain Shrapnell," said Miss Charity, with a frank stare with her honest goggle eyes, "you are talking *the* greatest *nonsense I* ever heard in my life."

"Miss Agnes, here, does not think so, hey?" giggled the captain. "Now, come, Miss Agnes, what do you think of young Verney, hey? There's a question."

How Miss Agnes hated the gibing, giggling wretch, and detested the club of whose prattle and gossip he was the inexhaustible spokesman; and would at that moment have hailed the appearance of a ship-of-war with her broadside directed upon the bow window of that haunt, with just, of course, such notice to her worthy father, whose gray head was visible in it, as was accorded to the righteous Lot—under orders, with shot, shell, rockets, and marlin-spikes, to blow the entire concern into impalpable dust.

It must be allowed that Miss Agnes was unjust; that it would not have been fair to visit upon the harmless and, on the whole, good-natured persons who congregated in that lively receptacle, and read the *Times* through their spectacles there, the waggeries and exaggerations of the agreeable captain, and to have reached that incorrigible offender, and demolished his stronghold at so great a waste of human life.

"Come, now; I won't let you off, Miss Aggie. I say, *there's* a question. What do you say? Come, now, you really must tell us. What *do* you think of young Verney?"

"If you wish to know what *I* think," interposed Miss Charity, "I think he's *the very nicest* man I *ever* spoke too. He's *so* nice about religion. Wasn't he, Aggie?"

Here the Captain exploded.

"Religion! egad—do you really mean to tell me—ha, ha, ha! Upon my soul, that's the richest thing!—now *really!*"

"My goodness! How frightfully wicked you are," exclaimed Miss Charity.

"True bill, egad; upon my soul, I'm afraid—ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, Captain Shrapnell, you *shall not* walk with us, if you swear," said Miss Charity.

"*Swear!* I didn't swear, did I? Very sorry if I did, upon my—I give you my word," said the Captain politely.

"Yes, you *did;* and it's *extremely wicked,*" said Miss Charity.

"Well, I won't; I swear to you, I won't;" vowed the captain, a little inconsistently; "but now about Master Cleve Verney, Miss Agnes. I said I would not let you off, and I won't. I give you my honor, you shall say what you think of him, or, by Jove!—I conclude you can't trust yourself on the subject, ha, ha, ha! Hey?"

"You *are* mad, Captain Shrapnell," interposed Miss Charity, with weight.

"I can't say, really, I've formed any particular opinion. I think he is rather agreeable," answered Miss Agnes, under this pressure.

"Well, so do *I*," acquiesced the captain. "Master Cleve can certainly be agreeable where he chooses, and you think him devilish good-looking—don't you?"

"I really can't say—he has very good features—but—"

"But what? Why every one allows that Verney's as good-looking a fellow as you'll meet with anywhere," persisted the captain.

"*I* think him *per*fectly *be-au*tiful!" said Miss Charity, who never liked people by halves.

"Well—yes—he may be handsome," said Miss Agnes; "I'm no very great critic; but I can't conceive any girl falling in love with him."

"Oh! as to *that*—but—*why?*" said Captain Shrapnell.

"His face, I think, is so selfish—somehow," she said.

"Is it now, really?—*how?*" asked the captain.

"I'm *am-azed* at you!" exclaimed Miss Charity.

"Well, there's a selfish hook—no, not a hook, a *curve*—of his nose, and a cruel crook of his shoulder," said Miss Agnes, in search of his faults.

"You're determined to hit him by hook or by crook—ha, ha, ha—I say," pursued the captain.

"A *hook!*" exclaimed Miss Charity, almost angrily; "there's *no* hook!—I *wonder* at you—I really think sometimes, Agnes, you're the greatest *fool* I ever met in the whole course of my life!"

"Well, I can't help thinking what I think," said Agnes.

"But you *don't* think *that*—you *know* you don't—you *can't* think it," decided her elder sister.

"No more she does," urged the captain, with his teasing giggle; "she *doesn't* think it; you always know when a girl abuses a man, she *likes* him—she does—by Jove—and I venture to say she thinks Master Cleve one of the very handsomest and most fascinating fellows she ever beheld," said the agreeable captain.

"I really think what I said," replied Agnes, and her pretty face showed a brilliant color, and her eyes had a handsome fire in them, for she was vexed; "though it is natural to think in a place like this, where all the men are more or less old and ugly, that any young man, even tolerably good-looking, should be thought a wonder."

"Ha, ha, ha! very good," said the captain, plucking out his whisker a little, and twiddling his mustache, and glancing down at his easy waistcoat, and perhaps ever so little put out: but he also saw over his shoulder Cleve crossing the green toward them from the Jetty, and not perhaps being quite on terms to call him "Master Cleve" to his face, he mentioned a promise to meet young Owen of Henlwyd in the billiard-room for a great game of pyramid, and so took off his hat gracefully to the ladies, and smirking, and nodding, and switching his cane, swaggered swiftly away toward the point of rendezvous.

So Cleve arrived, and joined the young ladies, and walked beside Agnes, chatting upon all sorts of subjects, and bearing some occasional reproofs and protests from Miss Charity with great submission and gayety, and when Miss Charity caught a glimpse of the "Admiral's" bath-chair, with that used-up officer in it, en *route* for the Hazelden road, and already near the bridge, she plucked her watch from her belt, with a slight pallor in her cheek, and "declared" she had not an idea how late it was. Cleve Verney accompanied the ladies all the way to Hazelden, and even went in, when Hazelden, and drank a cup of tea, at their early meal, and obeyed also a summons to visit the "Admiral" in his study.

"Very glad to see you, sir—very happy, Mr. Verney," said Mr. Vane Etherage, with his fez upon his head, and lowering his pipe with the gravity of a Turk. "I wish you would come and dine at three o'clock—the true hour for dinner, sir—I've tried every hour, in my time, from twelve to half-past eight—at three o'clock, sir, some day—any day—to-morrow. The Welsh mutton is the best on earth, and the Hazelden mutton is the best in Wales!" The "Admiral" always looked in the face of the person whom he harangued, with an expression of cool astonishment, which somehow aided the pomp of his delivery. "An unfortunate difference, Mr. Verney—a dispute, sir—has arisen between me and your uncle; but that, Mr. Verney, need not extend to his nephew; no, sir, it need *not;* no need it should. Shall we say to-morrow, Mr. Verney?"

I forget what excuse Mr. Verney made; it was sufficient, however, and he was quite unable to name an immediate day, but lived in hope. So having won golden opinions, he took his leave. And the good people of Cardyllian

who make matches easily, began to give Mr. Cleve Verney to pretty Miss Agnes Etherage.

While this marrying and giving in marriage was going on over many tea-tables, that evening, in Cardyllian, Mr. Cleve Verney, the hero of this new romance, had got ashore a little below Malory, and at nightfall walked down the old road by Llanderris Church, and so round the path that skirts the woods of Malory, and down upon the shore that winds before the front of the old house.

As he came in full sight of the shore, on a sudden, within little more than a hundred paces away, he saw, standing solitary upon the shingle, a tall man, with a tweed rug across his arm, awaiting a boat which was slowly approaching in the distance.

In this tall figure he had no difficulty in recognizing Sir Booth Fanshawe, whom he had confronted in other, and very different scenes, and who had passed so near him, in the avenue at Malory.

With one of those sudden and irresistible impulses, which, as they fail or succeed, are classed as freaks of madness, or inspirations of genius, he resolved to walk up to Sir Booth, and speak to him upon the subject then so near to his heart.

CHAPTER XXII.

SIR BOOTH SPEAKS.

The idea, perhaps, that sustained Cleve Verney in this move, was the sudden recurrence of his belief that Sir Booth would so clearly see the advantages of such a connection as to forget his resentments.

Sir Booth was looking seaward, smoking a cigar, and watching the approach of the boat, which was still distant. As Cleve drew near, he saw Sir Booth eye him, he fancied, uneasily; and throwing back his head a little, and withdrawing his cheroot ever so little from his lips, the Baronet demanded grimly—

"Wish to speak to *me*, sir?"

"Only a word, if you allow me," answered Cleve approaching.

On ascertaining that he had to deal with a gentleman, Sir Booth was confident once more.

"Well, sir, I hear you," said he.

"You don't recognize me, Sir Booth; and I fear when I introduce myself, you will hardly connect my name with any thing pleasant or friendly. I only ask a patient hearing, and I am sure your own sense of fairness will excuse me personally."

"Before you say more, sir, I should like to know for whom you take me, and why; I don't recollect *you*, I *think*—I can't see very well—no one does, in this sort of light; but I rather think, I never saw your face before, sir—nor you mine, I dare say—your guesses as to who I am, may be any thing you please—and quite mistaken—and this is not a usual time, you know, for talking with strangers about business—and, in fact, I've come here for quiet and my health, and I can't undertake to discuss other people's affairs—I find my own as much as my health and leisure will allow me to attend to."

"Sir Booth Fanshawe, you must excuse me for saying I know you perfectly. I am also well aware that you seek a little repose and privacy here, and you may rely implicitly upon my mentioning your name to no one; in fact, I have been for some weeks aware of your residing at Malory, and never *have* mentioned it to any one."

"Ha! you're *very* kind, indeed—taking *great* care of me, sir; you are very obliging," said Sir Booth sarcastically, "I'm sure; ha, ha! I ought to be very grateful. And to whom, may I ask, do I owe all this attention to my — my *interests* and comforts?"

"I am connected, Sir Booth, with a house that has unfortunately been a good deal opposed, in politics, to yours. There are reasons which make this particularly painful to me, although I have been by the direction of others, whom I had no choice but to obey, more in evidence in these miserable contests than I could wish; I've really been little more than a passive instrument in the hands of others, absolutely without power, or even influence of my own in the matter. You don't recognize me, but you have seen me elsewhere. My name is Cleve Verney."

Sir Booth had not expected this name, as his countenance showed. With a kind of jerk, he removed his cigar from his lips, sending a shower of red sparks away on the breeze, and gazing on the young man with eyes like balls of stone, ready to leap from their sockets. I daresay he was very near exploding in that sort of language which, on occasion, he did not spare. But he controlled himself, and said merely, clearing his voice first—

"That will do, sir, the name's enough; I can't be supposed to wish to converse with any one of that name, sir—no more I do."

"What I have to say, Sir Booth, affects *you*, it interests you very *nearly*," answered Cleve.

"But, sir, I am going out in that boat—I wish to smoke my cigar—I've come down here to live to myself, and to be alone when I choose it," said Sir Booth with suppressed exasperation.

"One word, I beg—you'll not regret it, Sir Booth," pleaded Cleve.

"Well, sir—come—I *will* hear it; but I tell you beforehand, I have pretty strong views as to how I have been used, and it is not likely to lead to much," said Sir Booth, with one of those sudden changes of purpose to which fiery men are liable.

So, as briefly and as persuasively as he could, Cleve Verney disclosed his own feelings, giving to the date of his attachment skillfully a retrospective character, and guarding the ladies of Malory from the unreasonable temper of this violent old man; and, in fact, from Cleve's statement you would have gathered that he was not even conscious that the ladies were now residing

at Malory. He closed his little confession with a formal proposal.

Was there something—ever so little—in the tone of this latter part of his brief speech, that reflected something of the confidence to which I have alluded, and stung the angry pride of this ruined man? He kept smoking his cigar a little faster, and looking steadily at the distant boat that was slowly approaching against the tide.

When Cleve concluded, the old man lowered his cigar and laughed shortly and scornfully.

"You do us a great deal of honor, Mr. Verney—too much honor, by —," scoffed the Baronet. "Be so good at all events as to answer me this one question frankly—yes or no. Is your uncle, Kiffyn Verney, aware of your speaking to me on this subject?"

"*No*, Sir Booth, he is not," said Cleve; "he knows nothing of it. I ought, perhaps, to have mentioned that at first."

"So you ought," said Sir Booth brusquely.

"And I beg that you won't mention the subject to him."

"You may be very sure I shan't, sir," said the Baronet fiercely. "Why, d—n it, sir, what do you mean? Do you know what you're saying? You come here, and you make a proposal for my daughter, and you think I should be so charmed that rather than risk your alliance I should practice any meanness you think fit. D—n you, sir, how dare you suppose I could fancy your aspiring to my daughter a thing to hide like a *mésalliance?*"

"Nothing of the kind, Sir Booth."

"*Every* thing of the kind, sir. Do you know who you are, sir? You have not a farthing on earth, sir, but what you get from your uncle."

"I beg your pardon—allow me, Sir Booth—I've six hundred a year of my own. I know it's very little; but I've been thought to have some energies; I know I have some friends. I have still my seat in the House, and this Parliament may last two or three years. It is quite possible that I may quarrel with my uncle; I can't help it; I'm quite willing to take my chance of that; and I entreat, Sir Booth, that you won't make this a matter of personal feeling, and attribute to me the least sympathy with the miserable doings of my uncle."

Sir Booth listened to him, looking over the sea as before, as if simply observing the approach of the boat, but he spoke this time in a mitigated tone.

"You're no young man," said he, "if you don't owe money. I never knew one with a rich old fellow at his back who didn't."

He paused, and Cleve looked down.

"In fact, you don't know how much you owe. If you were called on to book up, d'ye see, there might remain very little to show for your six hundred a year. You're just your uncle's nephew, sir, and nothing more. When you quarrel with him you're a ruined man."

"I don't see *that*—" began Cleve.

"But I do. If he quarrels with you, he'll never rest till he ruins you. That's his character. It might be very different if you had a *gentleman* to deal with; but you must look the thing in the face. You may never succeed to the title. We old fellows have our palsies and apoplexies; and you young fellows, your fevers and inflammations. Here you are quite well, and a fever comes, and turns you off like a gas-light the day after; and besides if you quarrel he'll marry, and where are you *then?* And I tell you frankly if Mr. Kiffyn Verney has objections to me, I've stronger to him. There's no brother of mine disgraced. Why, his elder brother—it's contamination to a gentleman to name him."

"He's dead, sir; Arthur Verney is dead," said Cleve, who was more patient under Sir Booth's bitter language than under any other circumstances he would have been.

"Oh? Well, that does not very much matter," said Sir Booth. "But this is the upshot: I'll have nothing underhand—all above-board, sir—and if Mr. Kiffyn Verney writes a proper apology—by — he owes me one—and puts a stop to the fiendish persecutions he has been directing against me, and himself submits the proposal you have—yes—done me the honor to make, and undertakes to make suitable settlements, I shan't stand in the way; I shan't object to your speaking to my daughter, though I can't the least tell how she'll take it: and I tell you from myself *I* don't like it—I don't, by —, I don't *like* it. He's a bad fellow—a nasty dog, sir, as any in England—but *that's* what I say, sir, and I shan't alter; and you'll please never to mention the subject to me again except on these conditions: except from him I decline to *hear* of it—not a word—and—and, sir, you'll please to regard my name as a secret; it has been hitherto; my liberty depends on it. Your uncle can't possibly know I'm here?" he added sharply.

"When last I saw him—a very short time since—he thought you were in France. You, of course, rely upon my honor, Sir Booth, that no one living shall hear from me one syllable affecting your safety."

"Very good, sir. I never supposed you would; but I mean *every* one—these boatmen, and the people here. No one is to know who I am; and—and what I've said *is my ultimatum*, sir. And I'll have no correspondence, sir—no attempt to visit *anywhere*. You understand. By — if you do, I'll *let your uncle*, Mr. Kiffyn Verney, know the moment I learn it. Be so good as to *leave* me."

"Good-night, sir," said Cleve.

Sir Booth nodded slightly.

The tall old man went stalking and stumbling over the shingle, toward the water's edge, still watching the boat, his cigar making a red star in the dusk, by which *Christmas Owen* might have steered; and the boatmen that night heard their mysterious steersman from Malory, as he sat with his hand on the tiller, talking more than usual to himself, now and then d—ing unknown persons, and backing his

esultory babble to the waves, with oaths that startled those sober-tongued dissenters.

Cleve walked slowly up that wide belt of rounded gray stones, that have rattled and rolled, perhaps, for centuries there, in every returning and retreating tide, and turned at last and looked toward the tall, stately figure of the old man now taking his place in the boat. Standing in the shadow, he watched it receding as the moonlight came out over the landscape. His thoughts began to clear, and he was able to estimate, according to his own gauges and rashness, the value and effect of his interview with the angry and embitttered old man.

He wondered at the patience with which he had borne this old man's impertinence—unparalleled impertinence; yet even now he could not resent it. He was the father of that beautiful Margaret. The interview was a mistake—a very mortifying ordeal it had proved—and its result was to block his path with new difficulties.

Not to approach except through the mediation of his Uncle Kiffyn! He should like to see how his uncle would receive a proposal to mediate in this matter. Not to visit—not to write—neither to see nor to hear of her! Submission to such conditions was not to be dreamed of. He trampled on them, and defied all consequences.

Cleve stood on the gray shingle looking after the boat, now running swiftly with the tide. A patch of sea-weed like an outstretched hand lay at his feet, and in the fitful breeze lifted a warning finger, again, and again, and again.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MARGARET HAS HER WARNING.

NEXT evening, I believe, Cleve saw Margaret Fanshawe, by favor of that kindest of chaperons, Miss Anne Sheckleton, at the spot where by chance they had met before—at the low bank that fences the wood of Malory, near the steep road that descends by the old church of Llanderris.

Here, in the clear glow of sunset, they met and talked under the old trees, and the good old spinster, with her spectacles on, worked at her crochet industriously, and often peered over it this way and that, it must be confessed, nervously, and with a prudence with which Cleve would gladly have dispensed, she hurried this hazardous meeting to a close.

Not ten minutes later Margaret Fanshawe stood alone at the old refectory window, which commands through the parting trees a view of the sea and the distant headland, now filmed in the aerial light and blush of sunset. I should not wonder if she had been drawn thither by the fanciful hope of seeing the passing sail of Cleve Verney's yacht—every sign and relic grows so interesting. Now is with them the season of all such things; romance has sent forth her angels; the woods, the clouds, the sea, the hills, are filled with them. Then is the play of fancy and the yearning of the heart—and the aching comes in its time.

Something sadder and gentler in the face than ever before. Undine has received a soul, and is changed. The boat has passed, and to catch the last glimpse of its white wing she crosses to the other side of the window, and stretches, with a long, strange gaze, till it has gone—quite gone—and every thing on a sudden is darker.

With her hand still on the worn stone shaft of the window, she leans and looks, in a dream, till the last faint tint of sunset dies on the gray mountain, and twilight is everywhere. So with a sigh, a vague trouble, and yet a wondrous happiness at her heart, she turns to leave the stone-floored chamber, and at the head of the steps that lead down from its door she is startled.

The pale old woman, with large, earnest eyes, was at the foot of this stone stair, with her head on the rude banister. It seemed to Margaret as if she had been waiting for her. Her great vague eyes were looking into hers as she appeared at the door.

Margaret arrested her step, and a little frown of fear for a moment curved her eyebrows. She did fear this old Rebecca Mervyn with an odd apprehension that she had something unpleasant to say to her.

"I'm coming up to you," said the old woman sadly, still looking at her as she ascended the steps.

Margaret's heart misgave her, but somehow she had not nerve to evade the interview, or rather, she had felt that it was coming and wished it over.

Once or twice in passing, the old woman had seemed to hesitate, as if about to speak to her, but had changed her mind and passed on. Only the evening before, just at the hour when the last ray of the sun comes from the west, and all the birds are singing their last notes, as she was tying up some roses, on the short terrace round the corner of the old mansion, she turned and raised her eyes, and in the window of the old building called the "Steward's House," the lattice being open, she saw, looking steadfastly upon her, from the shadows within, the pale face of this old woman. In its expression there was something ominous, and when she saw Margaret looking straight at her, she did not turn away, but looked on sadly, as unmoved as a picture, till Margaret, disconcerted, lowered her eyes, and went away.

As this old woman ascended the stairs, Margaret crossed the floor to the window—light is always reassuring—and leaning at its side, looked back, and saw Rebecca Mervyn already within the spacious chamber, and drawing near slowly from the shadow.

"You wish to speak to me, Mrs. Mervyn?" said the young lady, who knew her name, although now for the first time she spoke to her.

"Only a word. Ah!—yes—you *are—very*

beautiful," she said, with a deep sigh, as she stood looking at her, with a strange sadness and compassion in her gaze, that partook of the past, and the prophetic.

A little blush—a little smile—a momentary gleam of that light of triumph, in beauty so beautiful—showed that the fair apparition was mortal.

"Beauty—ah!—yes! If *it* were not here neither would *they*. Miss Margaret!—poor thing! I've seen him. I knew him, although it is a great many years," said old Rebecca. "The moment my eyes touched him, I knew him; there is something about them all, peculiar—the Verneys, I mean—I should know a Verney anywhere, in any crowd, in any disguise. I've dreamed of him, and thought of him, and watched for him, for—how many years? God help me, I forget! since I was as young as you are. Cleve Verney is handsome, but there were others, long before—oh! ever so much more beautiful. The Verney features—ah!—yes—thinking always, dreaming, watching, burnt into my brain; they have all some points alike. I knew Cleve by that; he is more like that than to his younger self; a handsome boy he was—but, I beg pardon, it is so hard to keep thoughts from wandering."

This old woman, from long solitude, I suppose, talked to others as if she were talking to herself, and rambled on, flightily and vaguely. But on a sudden she laid her hand upon Margaret's wrist, and closing it gently, held her thus, and looked in her face with great concern.

"Why does he come so stealthily? *death* comes so, to the young and beautiful. My poor sister died in Naples. No one knew there was danger the day before she was sent away there, despaired of. Well may I say the angel of death—beautiful, insidious—that's the way they come—stealthily, mysterious—when I saw his handsome face about here—I shuddered—in the twilight—in the dark."

Margaret's cheek flushed, and she plucked her wrist to disengage it from the old woman's hand.

"You had better speak to my cousin, Miss Sheckleton. It is she who receives Mr. Verney when he comes. She has known him longer than I; at least made his acquaintance earlier," said the young lady. "I don't, I confess, understand what you mean. I've been trying, and I can't; perhaps *she* will."

"I must say this; it is on my mind," said the old woman, without letting her hand go. "There is something horrible in the future. You do not know the Verneys. They are a *cruel* race. It would be better to suffer an evil spirit into the house. Poor young lady! To be another *innocent victim*—break it off—expel him! Shut out, if you can, his face from your thoughts and your memory. It is one who knows them well who warns you. It will not come to good."

In the vague warning of this old woman, there was an echo of an indefinite fear that had lain at her own heart for days. Neither, spart was any thing; but one seconding the other wa ominous and depressing.

"Let me go, please," she said, a little brusque ly, "it is growing dark, and I *must* go in. I sure, however, you mean what you say kind and I thank you for the intention, thank you very much."

"Yes—go—I shall stay here; from here on can see across to Pendillion, and the sea there it will come again, I know it will, some day or night. My old eyes are weary with watching I should know the sail again, although it is long, long time—I've lost count of the years."

Thus saying she drew near the window, and without a word of farewell to Margaret, became absorbed in gazing, and Margaret left her, ran lightly down the steps, and in a minute more was in the house.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Days passed during which Cleve Verney paid stolen visits at Malory, more cautiously managed than ever, and nearly every afternoon did the good people of Cardyllian see him walk the green, to and fro, with the Hazelden girls, so that the subject began to be canvassed very gravely, and even Miss Charity was disposed to think that he certainly *did* like Agnes, and confided to her friend, Mrs. Brindley, of "The Cottage," that if Aggie married, *she* should give up. *Nothing* could induce *her*, Miss Charity, to marry, she solemnly assured her friends.

And I must do that spinster the justice to say, that there was not the faintest flavor of sour grapes in the acerbity with which she pronounced against the "shocking folly of girls marrying," for she might undoubtedly have been married, having had in her youth several unexceptionable offers, none of which had ever moved her.

I know not what hopes Sir Booth may have founded upon his conversation with Cleve Verney. Men in the baronet's predicament nurse their hopes fondly, and their mustard seeds grow rapidly into great trees, in whose branches they shelter their families, and roost themselves. He grew gracious at times in the contemplation of brilliant possibilities, and one day, to her amazement and consternation, opened the matter briefly to Miss Sheckleton, who fancied that she was discovered, and he on the point of exploiting, and felt as if she were going to faint.

Happily for her, he fancied that Cleve must have seen Margaret accidentally during some of his political knight-errantries in the country which he had contested with Sir Booth. We know, as well as Miss Sheckleton, how this really was.

Sir Booth's dreams, however, were broken with a crash. To Miss Anne Sheckleton came a letter from Sir Booth's attorneys, informing the baronet that Mr. Kiffyn Fulke Verney had just served them with a notice which seemed to

threaten a wantonly vexatious and expensive proceeding, and then desired to know what course, having detailed the respective consequences of each, he would wish them to take.

Now, Sir Booth broke into one of his frenzies, called up Miss Sheckleton, damned and cursed the whole Verney family, excommunicated them, and made the walls of Malory ring with the storm and thunder he launched at the heads of the ancient race who had built them.

Scared and pale, Miss Anne Sheckleton withdrew.

"My dear, something has happened; he has had a letter from his law people, and Mr. Kiffyn Verney has directed, I think, some unexpected proceedings. How I wish they would stop these miserable lawsuits, and leave your papa at peace. Your papa's attorneys think they can gain nothing by worrying him, and it *is* so unfortunate just now."

So spoke Miss Sheckleton, who had found Margaret, with her bullfinch and her squirrels, in that pretty but melancholy room which is darkened by the old wood, through whose shafted stems long shadowy perspectives open, and there, as in the dim light of a monastic library, she was busy over the illumination of her vellum Psalter, with gold and ultramarine, and all other vivid pigments.

Margaret stood up, and looked in her face rather pale, and with her small hand pressed to her heart.

"He's *very* angry," added Miss Sheckleton, with a dark look and a nod.

"Are we going to leave this?" inquired the girl in almost a whisper.

"He did not say; I fancy not. No, he'd have said so the first thing," answered the old lady.

"Well, we can do nothing; it can't be helped, I suppose," said Miss Margaret, looking down very sadly on her mediæval blazonry.

"Nothing, my dear; nothing on earth. No one can be more anxious that all this kind of thing should cease, than Cleve Verney, as you know; but what can even *he* do?" said Miss Sheckleton.

Margaret looked through the window, down the dark glade, and sighed.

"His uncle, Kiffyn Verney," resumed Anne Sheckleton, "is such a disagreeable, spiteful man, and such a feud has been between them, I really don't see how it is to end; but Cleve, you know, is so clever, and so devoted, I'm sure he'll find some way."

Margaret sighed again, and said—

"Papa, I suppose, is *very* angry."

I think Sir Booth Fanshawe was the only person on earth whom that spirited girl really feared. I'm afraid there was not much good in that old man, and that most of the things I have heard of him were true. Unlike other violent men, he was not easily placable; and generally, when it was not very troublesome, remembered and executed his threats. She remembered dimly scenes between him and her dead mother. She remembered well her childish dread of his severity, and her fear of his eye and his voice had never left her.

Miss Sheckleton just lifted her fingers in the air, and raised her eyes to the ceiling, with a little shake of her head.

Margaret sighed again. I suppose she was thinking of that course of true love that never yet ran smooth, upon which the freightage of her life was ventured.

Her spinster friend looked on her sad pale face, gazing drearily into the forest shades. The solemn shadow of the inevitable, the sorrows of human life, had now for the first time begun to touch her young face. The old story was already telling itself to her, in those faint ominous musical tones that swell to solemn anthem soon; and sometimes, crash and howl at last in storm over such wreck, and in such darkness as we shut our eyes upon, and try to forget.

Old Anne Sheckleton's face saddened at the sight with a beautiful softness. She laid her thin hand on the girl's shoulder, and then put her arms about her neck, and kissed her, and said—"All will come right, darling, you'll see;" and the girl made answer by another kiss; and they stood for a minute, hand locked in hand, and the old maid smiled tenderly, a cheerful smile but pale, and patted her cheek and nodded, and, with another kiss, left the room, with a mournful presage heavy at her heart.

As she passed, the stern voice of Sir Booth called to her.

"Yes," she answered.

"A word or two," he said, and she went to his room.

"I've been thinking," said he, looking at her steadily and fiercely—had some suspicion lighted up his mind since he had spoken to her?—"that young man, Cleve Verney, I believe he's still at Ware? Do you know him?"

"I should know his appearance. I saw him two or three times during that contest for the county, two years since; but he did not see me, I'm sure."

This was an evasion, but the vices of slavery always grow up under a tyranny.

"Well, *Margaret;* does *she* correspond with any one?" demanded he.

"I can answer for it, positively. Margaret has no correspondence. She writes to *no* one," she answered.

"That fellow is still at Ware. So Christmas Owen told me last night—a place of the Verneys, at the other side—and he has got a post. I should not wonder if he were to come here, trying to see her."

So Sir Booth followed out his hypothesis, and waxed wroth, and more wroth as he proceeded, and so chafed himself into one of his paroxysms of temper. I know not what he said, but when she left him, poor Miss Sheckleton was in tears, and trembling, told Margaret, that if it were not for *her*, she would not remain another day in his house. She related to Margaret what had passed, and said—

"I almost hope Cleve Verney may not come again while we remain here. I really don't know what might be the consequence of your papa's meeting him here, in his present state of exasperation! Of course to Cleve it would be very little; but your existence, my poor child, would be made so miserable! And as for me, I tell you frankly, I should be compelled to leave you. Every one knows what Booth Fanshawe is when he is angry—how cruel he *can* be. I know he's your father, my dear, but we can't be blind to facts, and we both know that his misfortunes have not improved his temper."

Cleve nevertheless saw the ladies that day, talked with them earnestly and hurriedly, for Miss Anne Sheckleton was nervous and miserable till the interview ended, and submitted to the condition imposed by that kindly and panic-stricken lady, which was on no account to visit Malory as heretofore for two or three days, by the end of which time she hoped Sir Booth's anger and suspicions might have somewhat subsided.

CHAPTER XXV.

IN WHICH THE LADIES PEEP INTO CARDYLLIAN.

"My dear child," said Miss Sheckleton next day, "is not this a very wild freak, considering you have shut yourself up so closely, and not without reason? Suppose among the visitors at Cardyllian there should happen to be one who has seen and knows you, how would it be if he or she should meet and recognize you?"

"Rely on me, dear old cousin, no one shall know me."

The young lady, in a heavy gray Highland shawl, was standing before the looking-glass in her room as she spoke.

"Girls look all alike in these great shawls, and I shall wear my thick lace vail, through which I defy any one to see a feature of my face, and even my feet, in these strong, laced boots, are disguised. *Now—see!* I should not know myself in the glass among twenty others. I might meet you a dozen times in Cardyllian and you should not recognize me. Look and say."

"H'm—well! I must allow it would not be easy to see through all this," said Miss Sheckleton; "but don't forget and lift up your vail when you come into the town—the most unlikely people are there sometimes. Who do you think I had a bow from the other day, but old Doctor Bell, who lives in York; and the same evening in Castle Street whom should I see but my Oxford Street dress-maker. It does not matter, you know, where a solitary old maid like me is seen, but it would be quite different in your case, and who knows what danger to your papa might result from it?"

"I shan't forget—I really shan't," said the girl.

"Well, dear, I've said all I could to dissuade you, but if you *will* come I suppose you must," said Miss Anne.

"It's just as you say—a fancy," answered Margaret, "but I feel that if I were disappointed I should die."

I think, and Miss Sheckleton thought so too, that this pretty girl was very much excited that day, and could not endure the terrible stillness of Malory. Uncertainty, suspense, enforced absence from the person who loved her best in the world, and who yet is very near; dangers and hopes, quite new—no wonder if all these incidents of her situation did excite her.

It was near a week since the elder lady had appeared in the streets and shops of Cardyllian. Between the banks of the old sylvan road she and her mysterious companion walked in silence into steep Church Street, and down that quaint quarter of the town presenting houses of all dates from three centuries ago, and by the church, still older, down into Castle Street, in which, as we know, stands the shop of Jones the draper. Empty of customers was this well-garnished shop when the two ladies of Malory entered it; and Mrs. Jones raised her broad bland, spectacled face, with a smile and a word of greeting to Miss Anne Sheckleton, and an invitation to both ladies to "be seated," and her usual inquiry, as she leaned over the counter, "And what will you be pleased to want?" and the order, "John, get down the gray linseys—not *them*—those over yonder—yes, sure, you'd like to see the best—I *know* you would."

So some little time was spent over the linseys, and then—

"You're to measure thirteen yards, John, for Miss Anne Sheckleton, and send it over with trimmin's and linin's to Miss Pritchard. Miss Anne Sheckleton will speak to Miss Pritchard about the trimmin's herself."

Then Mrs. Jones observed—

"*What* a day this has been—hasn't it, Miss? And such weather, *al*together, I really don't remember in Cardyllian, *I* think *ever*."

"Yes, charming weather," acquiesced Miss Sheckleton, and just then two ladies came in and bought some velvet ribbon, which caused an interruption.

"What a pretty girl," said Miss Anne, so soon as the ladies had withdrawn. "Is that her mother?"

"Oh, no—dear, no, Miss; they are sisters," half laughed Mrs. Jones. "Don't you know who they are? No! Well, they are the Miss Etherages. There, they're going down to the green. She'll meet him there. She's going to make a *very great* match, ma'am—yes, indeed."

"Oh? But whom is she going to meet?" asked Miss Anne, who liked the good lady's gossip.

"Oh, you *don't know?* Well, dear me! I thought every one knew that. Why Mr. Cleve, of course—young Mr. Verney. He meets her every afternoon on the green here, and walks home with the young ladies. It has been a very old liking—you understand—between them, and lately he has grown very pressing, and they do say—them that should know—that the Admiral

—we call him—Mr. Vane Etherage—her father, has spoke to him. She has a good fortune, you know—yes, indeed—the two Miss Etherages has—we count them quite heiresses here in Cardyllian, and a very good old family too. Every body is pleased it is to be, and they do say Mr. Kiffyn—that is, the Honorable Kiffyn Fulke Verney—will be very glad, too, he should settle at last, and has wrote to the young lady's father, to say how well pleased he is; for Mr. Cleve has been"—here she dropped her voice to a confidential murmur, approaching her spectacles to the very edge of her customer's bonnet, as she rested her fat arms upon the counter—"wild. Oh, dear! they do tell such *stories* of him! A pity, Miss Sheckleton—*isn't* it?—there should be so many stories to his prejudice. But, *dear* me! he *has* been wild, Miss; and now, you see, on that account it is Mr. Kiffyn—the Honorable Kiffyn Fulke Verney—is so well pleased he should settle and take a wife that will be so liked by the people at Ware as well as at this side."

Miss Anne Sheckleton had been listening with an uneasiness which the draper's wife fancied she saw, yet doubted her own observation; for she could not understand why her old spinster customer should care a farthing about the matter, the talk about his excursions to Malory having been quite suspended and abolished by the sustained and vigorous gossip to which his walks with Agnes Etherage, and his ostentatious attention, had given rise.

"But Miss Etherage is hardly the kind of person—is she?—whom a young man of fashion, such as I suppose young Mr. Verney to be, would think of. She must have been very much shut up with her old father, at that quite little place of his," suggested Miss Sheckleton.

"Shut up, Miss! Oh, dear me! Nothing of *that* sort, Miss. She is out with her sister, Miss Charity, every day, about the schools, and the Sunday classes, and the lending library, and the clothing charity, and all them things; very good of *her*, you know. I often say to her—'I *wonder*, Miss Agnes—that's her name—you're not *tired* with all you walk; I do, indeed;' and she only laughs. She has a pretty laugh too, she has; and Mr. Cleve said to me once—that's two years ago, now—the first year he was spoke of in Cardyllian about her. We did think then there was something to be, and now it is all on again, and the old people—as we may call them—is well pleased it should."

"Yes, but I mean that Miss Etherage has seen nothing of the world—nothing of society, except what is to be met with at Hazelden—isn't that the name of the place?—and in her little excursions into this town. Isn't it so?" said Miss Sheckleton.

"Oh, no!—bless you, no. Miss Agnes Etherage—they pay visits—she and her sister—at all the great houses; a week here, and a fortnight there, round the two counties, this side and the other. She's a great favorite, is Miss Agnes. She can play and sing, dear me, very nice; she can. I have *heard* her. You would *wonder*, now, what a bright little thing she is."

"But even so. I don't think that town-bred young men ever care much for country-bred young ladies. Not that they mayn't be a great deal better; but, somehow, they don't suit, I think—they don't get on."

"But, mark you this," said Mrs. Jones. "He always liked her. We always saw he liked her. There's property too—a good estate; and all goes to them two girls; and Miss Charity, we all know, will never marry; no more will the Admiral—I mean Mr. Etherage himself—with them legs of his; and Mr. Kiffyn—Master Cleve's uncle—spoke to our lawyer here once about it, as if it was a thing he would like—that the Hazeldon property should be joined to the Ware estate."

"Joined together in holy wedlock," laughed Miss Sheckleton; but she was not particularly cheerful. And some more intending purchasers coming in and seizing upon the communicative Mrs. Jones, who had only time to whisper "They do say—them that *should* know—that it will be in Spring next; but I'm not to tell; so you'll please remember it's a secret."

"Shall we go, dear?" whispered Miss Sheckleton to her muffled companion, who forthwith rose and accompanied her from the shop, followed by the eyes of Mrs. Jones's new visitors, who were more interested on hearing that "it was Miss Anne Sheckleton and the other Malory lady," and they slipped out to the door-step, and under the awning peeped after the mysterious ladies, until an accidental backward glance from Miss Sheckleton routed them, and the *materfamilias* entered a little hastily but gravely, and with her head high, and her young ladies tittering.

As Cleve Verney walked to and fro beside pretty Agnes Etherage that day, and talked as usual, gayly and fluently, there seemed on a sudden to come a sort of blight over the harvest of his thoughts—both corn and flowers. He repeated the end of his sentence, and forgot what he was going to say; and Miss Charity said, "Well? go on; I want so much to hear the end;" and looking up, she thought he looked a little pale.

"Yes, certainly, I'll tell you the end when I can remember it. But I let myself think of something else for a moment, and it has flown away—"

"I beg your pardon," interrupted Miss Charity, "just a moment; look there Aggie; aren't those the Malory ladies?"

"Where?" said Cleve. "Oh! I see. Very like, I think—the old lady, I mean."

"Yes, oh certainly," replied Agnes, "it is the old lady, and I'm nearly certain the young lady also; who *else can* it be? It must be she."

"They are going over the hill to Malory," said Miss Charity. "I don't know what it is about that old lady that I think so *wonderfully* nice, and so perfectly charming, and the young lady is *the* most perfectly—beautiful—person,

all to *nothing*, I ever saw in my life. Don't you think so, Mr. Verney?"

"Your sister, I'm sure, is very much obliged," said he, with a glance at Agnes. "But this Malory young lady is so muffled in that great shawl that there is very little indeed to remind one of the young lady we saw in Church—"

"What o'clock is that?" interrupted Miss Charity, as the boom of the clock from the church tower sounded over the green.

So it seemed their hour had come, and the little demonstration on the green came to a close, and Cleve that evening walked with the Hazelden ladies only so far as the bridge, there taking his leave with an excuse. He felt uncomfortably somehow. That Margaret Fanshawe should have actually come down to Cardyllian was a singular and almost unaccountable occurrence.

Cleve Verney had certainly not intended the pantomime which he presented to the window of the Cardyllian reading-room for the eyes that had witnessed it.

Cleve was uncomfortable. It is always unpleasant to have to explain—especially where the exculpation involves a disclosure that is not noble.

CHAPTER XXVI.

IN THE OAK PARLOR—A MEETING AND PARTING.

"GOSSIPING place Cardyllian is," said Miss Anne Sheckleton, after they had walked on a little in silence. "What nonsense the people do talk. I never heard any thing like it. Did you ever hear such a galamathias?"

The young lady walking by her side answered by a cold little laugh—

"Yes, I suppose so. All small country towns *are*, I believe," said she.

"And that good old soul, Mrs. Jones, she does invent the most absurd gossip about every body that imagination can conceive. Wilmot told me the other day that she had given her to understand that your father is a madman, sent down here by London doctors for change of air. I make it a point never to mind one word she says; although her news, I confess, does amuse me."

"Yes, it is very foolish. Who are those Etherages?" said Margaret.

"Oh! They are village people—oddities," said Miss Sheckleton. "From all I can gather, you have no idea what absurd people they are."

"He was walking with them. Was not he?" asked the young lady.

"Yes—I think so," answered her cousin.

Then followed a long silence, and the elder lady at length said—

"How fortunate we have been in our weather; haven't we? How beautiful the hills look this evening!" said the spinster; but her words did not sound as if she cared about the hills or the light. I believe the two ladies were acting a part.

"Yes," said Margaret, "so they do."

The girl felt as if she had walked fifty miles instead of two—quite worn out—her limbs aching with a sense of fatigue; it was a trouble to hold her head up. She would have liked to sit down on the old stone bench they were passing now, and to die there like a worn-out prisoner on a march.

Two or three times that evening as they sat unusually silent and listless, Miss Anne Sheckleton peeped over her spectacles, lowering her work for a moment, with a sad inquiry, into her face, and seemed on the point of speaking. But there was nothing inviting to talk in Margaret's face, and when she spoke there was no reference to the subject on which Miss Sheckleton would have liked to speak.

So, at last tired, with a pale wandering smile she kissed the kind old spinster and bid her good-night. When she reached her room, however, she did not undress, but having secured her door, she sat down to her little desk, and wrote a letter; swiftly and resolutely the pen glided over the page. Nothing added—nothing erased; each line remained as she penned it first.

Having placed this letter in its envelope, and addressed it to "Cleve Verney, *Esq.*, *Ware*," she opened her window. The air was mild; none of the sharpness in it that usually gives to nights at that time of year, a frosty foretaste of winter. So sitting by the window, which, placed in one of the gables of the old house, commands a view of the uplands of Cardyllian, and to the left, of the sea and the misty mountains—she sat there, leaning upon her hand.

Here with the letter on her lap, she sat, pale as a meditating suicide, and looking dreamily over the landscape. It is, at times, some little incident of by-play, or momentary hesitation of countenance, that gives its whole character and force to a situation. Before the retina of Margaret one image was always visible, that of Cleve Verney as she saw him to-day, looking under Agnes Etherage's bonnet, with interest, into her face, as he talked and walked by her side, on the green of Cardyllian.

Of course there are false prophecies as well as true, in love; illusions as well as inspirations, and fancied intimations may mislead. But Margaret could not doubt here. All the time she smiled and assumed her usual tone and manner, there was an agony at her heart.

Miss Fanshawe would trust no one with her secret. She was not like other girls. Something of the fiery spirit of her southern descent she had inherited. She put on the shawl and vail she had worn that day, unbarred the hall door, and at two o'clock, when Cardyllian was locked in the deepest slumber, glided through its empty streets to the little wooden portico, over which that day she had read "Post-office," and placed in it the letter which next morning made quite a little sensation in the post-office *coterie*.

Under the awful silence and darkness of the

old avenue, she reached again the hall door of Malory. She stood for a moment upon the steps looking seaward—I think toward Ware—pale as a ghost, with one slender hand clenched, and a wild sorrow in her face. She cared very little, I think, whether her excursion were discovered or not. The messenger had flown from her empty hand; her voice could not recall it or delay it for an hour—quite irrevocable, and all was over.

She entered the hall, closed and barred the door again, ascended to her room, and lay awake, through the long night, with her hand under her cheek, not stunned, nor dreaming, but in a frozen apathy, in which she saw all with a despairing clearness.

Next day Cleve Verney received a note, in a hand which he knew not; but having read—could not mistake—a cold, proud note, with a gentle cruelty, ending all between them, quite decisively, and not deigning a reason for it.

I dare say that Cleve could not himself describe with much precision the feelings with which he read this letter.

Cleve Verney, however, could be as impetuous and as rash too, on occasion, as other people. There was something of rage in his soul which scouted all consequences. Could temerity be imagined more audacious than his.

Right across from Ware to the jetty of Malory ran his yacht, audaciously, in open sea, in broad day-light. There is, in the dower house, a long low room, wainscoated in black shining panels from floor to ceiling, and which in old times was called the oak parlor. It has two doors in one of its long sides, the farther opening near the stairs, the other close to the hall door.

Up the avenue, up the steps, into the hall, and, taking chance, into this room, walked Cleve Verney, without encountering interruption or even observation. *Fortuna favet fortibus*, so runs the legend in faded gold letters, under the dim portrait of Sir Thomas Verney, in his armor, fixed in the panel of the hall. So it had proved with his descendant.

Favored by fortune, without having met a human being, and directed by the same divinity it would seem, he had entered the room I have described; and at the other end, alone, awaiting Miss Sheckleton, who was to accompany her in a little ramble among the woods, stood Miss Fanshawe, dressed for her walk.

In came Cleve pale with agitation; approached her quickly, and stopped short, saying—

"I've come; I'm here to ask—how could you—my God!—how *could* you write the letter you sent this morning?"

Miss Fanshawe was leaning a little against the oak window-frame, and did not change this pose, which was haughty and almost sullen.

"*Why* I wrote that letter, *no* one has a right to ask me, and I shall say no more than is contained in the letter itself." She spoke so coldly and quietly that there seemed almost a sadness in her tones.

"I don't think you can really mean it," said Cleve, "I'm *sure* you can't; you can't *possibly* think that any one could use another so, without a reason."

"*Not* without a reason," said she.

"But I say, surely I have a right to hear it," urged Cleve. "Is it fair to condemn me, as your letter does, unheard, and to punish me in ignorance?"

"*Not* in ignorance; at this moment, you *know* the reason perfectly," replied the girl, and he felt as if her great hazel eyes lighted up all the dark labyrinths of his brain, and disclosed every secret that lurked there.

Cleve was for a moment embarrassed, and averted his eyes. It was true. He *did* know; he could not fail to guess the cause. He had been cursing his ill luck all the morning, and wondering what malign caprice could have led her, of all times and places, at that moment to the green of Cardyllian.

In the "Arabian Nights," that delightful volume which owes nothing to trick or bookcraft, and will preserve its charm undimmed through all the imitations of style and schools, which, projecting its images from the lamp and hues of a dazzling fancy, can no more be lectured into neglect than the magic lantern, and will preserve its popularity while the faculty of imagination and the sense of color remain, we all remember a parallel. In the "Sultan's Purveyor's Story," where the beautiful favorite of Zobside is about to make the bridegroom of her love quite happy, and in the moment of his adoration, starts up transformed with a "lamentable cry," and hate and fury in her aspect, all about that unfortunate "ragout made with garlic," and thereupon, with her own hand and terrible scourge, lashes him, held down by slaves, into a welter of blood, and then orders the executioner to strike off, at the wrist, his offending hand.

"Oh, *yes!* you *do* know, self-convicted, *why* I think it better for both that we should part now—better that we should thus early be undeceived; with little pain and less reluctance, forget the precipitation and folly of an hour, and go our several ways through life apart. You are fickle; you are selfish; you are reckless; you are quite unworthy of the love you ask for; if you are trifling with that young lady, Miss Etherage, how cruel and unmanly; and if *not*, by what right do you presume to stand here?"

Could he ever forget that beautiful girl as he saw her before him there, almost terrible—her eyes—the strange white light that seemed to flicker on her forehead—her attitude, Italian more than English, statuesque and wild?

On a sudden came another change, sad as a broken-hearted death and farewell—the low tone—the fond lingering—of an unspeakable sorrow, and eternal leave-taking.

"In either case my resolution is taken. I have said *Farewell;* and I will see you no more—no more—never."

And as she spoke, she left the room by the door that was beside her.

It was a new sensation for Cleve Verney to feel as he did at that moment. A few steps he followed toward the door, and then hesitated. Then with a new impulse, he did follow and open it. But she was gone. Even the sound of her step was lost.

He turned back and paused for a minute to collect his thoughts. Of course this must not be. The idea of giving her up so was simple nonsense, and not to be listened to.

The door at which the young lady had left the room but two or three minutes before, now opened, and Miss Sheckleton's natty figure and kind old face came in. Quite aghast she looked at him.

"For God's sake, Mr. Verney, why are you here? How *can* you be so rash?" she almost gasped. "You *must* go, *instantly*."

"How could you advise the cruelty and folly of that letter?" he said, impetuously.

"What letter?"

"Oh! Miss Sheckleton, do let us be frank; only say what have I done or said or thought, that I should be condemned and discarded without a hearing?"

Hereupon Miss Sheckleton, still urging his departure in frightened whispers, protested her innocence of his meaning, and at last bethought her of persuading him to leave the house, and meet her for the purpose of explaining all, of which he soon perceived she was honestly ignorant, in their accustomed trysting place.

There, accordingly, among the old trees, they met and discussed, and she blamed and pitied him; and promised, with such caution as old ladies use in speaking for the resolves of the young of their own sex, that Margaret should learn the truth from her, although she could not of course say what she might think of it, taking as she did such decided, and, sometimes, strange views of things.

So they parted kindly. But Cleve's heart was disquieted within him, and his sky this evening was wild and stormy.

CHAPTER XXVII.

JUDÆUS APELLA.

On the stillest summer day did you ever see nature quite still, even that circumscribed nature that hems you round with densest trees, as you lounge on your rustic seat, in lazy contemplation, amid the shorn grass of your flower-beds, and which are all oppressed and stifled with heat and slumber? Look attentively, and you will see a little quiver like a dying pulse in the hanging flower-bells, and a light faint tremble in this leaf and that. Of nature, which is, being interpreted, life, the law is motion, and this law controls the moral as well as the physical world. Thus it is that there is nowhere any such thing as absolute repose, and everywhere we find change and action.

Over Malory, if anywhere, broods the spirit of repose. Buried in deep forest—fenced on one side by the lonely estuary—no town or village lying beyond it; seaward the little old-world roads that pass by it are quite forsaken by traffic. Even the sound of children's laughter and prattle are never heard there, and little but the solemn caw of the rooks and the baying of the night dog. Yet chance was then invading that quiet seclusion with an unexpected danger.

A gentleman driving that day to the "George Inn" at Cardyllian, from a distant station on the Great London line, and having picked up from his driver, a Cardyllian man, all he could about Malory, and old Mrs. Mervyn who lived there, stopped suddenly at the corner of the old road, which, two miles below Cardyllian, turns off inland, and rambles with many pleasant windings into the road that leads to Penruthyn Priory.

This gentleman, whose dress was in the cheap and striking style, and whose jewelry was conspicuous, was high-shouldered, with a very decided curve, though not exactly a hunch. He was small, with rather long arms. His hair, whiskers, and beard were glossy black, and his features Jewish. He switched and twirled a black walking-cane, with silver knobs on it, in his hand, and he had two or three rings on his fingers.

His luggage had gone on to the "George," and whenever opportunity occurred along that solitary road he renewed his inquiries about Malory, with a slight peculiarity of accent which the unsophisticated rustics in that part of the world had never heard before.

By this time it was evening, and in the light of the approaching sunset, he might now, as the view of the sea and the distant mountains opened, have enjoyed a pleasure for which, however, he had no taste; these evening glows and tints were to him but imperfect light, and he looked along the solemn and shadowy hills as he would have run his eye along the shops in Cheapside—if with any interest, simply to amuse himself with a calculation of what they might be worth in money.

He was now passing the pretty church-yard of Llanderris. The gray head-stones and grass-grown graves brought home to him no passing thought of change and mortality; death was to him an arithmetical formula by which he measured annuities and reversions and policies. And now he had entered the steep pretty road that leads down with an irregular curve to Malory.

He looked down upon the grand old wood. He had a smattering of the value of timber, and remembered what a hit Rosenthal & Solomons had made of their purchase of the wood at East Milton, when the railway was about to be made there; and what a nice bit of money they had made of their contract for sleepers and all sorts of other things. Could not Jos. Larkin, or some better man, be found to get up a little branch line from Lluinan to Cardyllian? His large mouth almost watered as he thought of it; and how that eight or nine miles of rail would devour

every inch of timber that grew there—not a branch would be lost.

But now he was descending toward Malory, and the banks at the right hand and the left shut out the view. So he began to descend the slope at his leisure, looking up and about him and down at the worn road for material for thought, for his mind was bustling and barren.

The road is not four steps across. It winds steeply between high banks. Over these stoop, and cross, and mingle in the perspective, the gray stems of tall ash trees mantled in ivy, which here and there has climbed among the boughs, and made a darker umbrage among the clear green foliage of the trees. Beneath, ascending the steep banks, grow clumps of nettles, elder, hazel, and thorn. Only down the slope of the road can the passenger see any thing of the country it traverses, for the banks out-top him on either side. The rains have washed its stones so bare, wearing a sort of gulley in the centre, as to give it the character in some sort of a forest ravine.

The sallow hatchet-faced man, with prominent black eyes, was walking up this steep and secluded road. Those sharp eyes of his were busy. A wild bee hummed over his head, and he cut at it pleasantly with his stick, but it was out of reach, and he paused and eyed its unconscious flight with an ugly smile, as if he owed it a grudge for having foiled him. There was little life in that secluded and dark track. He spied a small dome-shaped black beetle stumbling through the dust and pebbles across it.

The little man drew near and peered at it with his piercing eyes and a pleasant grin. He stooped. The point of his pale nose was right over it. Across the desert the beetle was toiling. His path was a right line. The little man looked across to see what he was aiming at, or where was his home. There was nothing particular that he could perceive in the grass and weeds at the point whitherward he was tending in a right line. The beetle sprawled and stumbled over a little bead of clay, recovered his feet and his direction, and plodded on in a straight line. The little man put his stick, point downward, before him. The beetle rounded it carefully, and plodded on inflexibly in the same direction. Then he of the black eyes and long nose knocked him gently in the face, and again, and again, jerking him this way or that. Still, like a prize-fighter he rallied between the rounds, and drove right on in his old line. Then the little man gave him a sharper knock, which sent him a couple of feet away, on his back; right and left sprawled and groped the short legs of the beetle, but alas! in vain. He could not right himself. He tried to lurch himself over, but in vain. Now and then came a frantic gallop with his little feet; it was beating the air. This was pleasant to the man with the piercing eyes, who stooped over, smiling with his wide mouth, and showing his white fangs. I wonder what the beetle thought of his luck—what he thought of it all. The paroxysms of hope, when his feet worked so hard, grew shorter. The intervals of despair and inaction grew longer. The beetle was making up his mind that he must lie on his back and die slowly, or be crushed under a hoof, or picked up and swallowed by a wandering farm-yard fowl.

Though it was pleasant to witness his despair, the man with the prominent eyes tired of the sight, he gave him a poke under the back, and tumbled him up again on his feet, and watched him. The beetle seemed a little bothered for a while, and would have shaken himself I'm sure if he could. But he soon came to himself, turned in his old direction, and, as it seemed to the observer, marched stumbling on with indomitable perseverance toward the self-same point. I know nothing of beetle habits. I can make no guess why he sought that particular spot. Was it merely a favorite haunt, or were there a little beetle brood, and a wife awaiting him there? A strong instinct of some sort urged him, and a most heroic perseverance.

And now I suppose he thought his troubles over, and that his journey was about surely to be accomplished. Alas! it will never be accomplished. There is an influence near which you suspect not. The distance is lessening, the green grass, and dock leaves, and mallows, very near. Alas! there is no sympathy with your instinct, with the purpose of your life, with your labors and hopes. An inverted sympathy is *there;* a sympathy with the difficulty—with "the Adversary"—with death. The little man with the sharp black eyes brought the point of his stick near the beetle's back, having seen enough of his pilgrimage, and squelched him.

The pleasure of malice is curious. There are people who flavor their meals with their revenges, whose future is made interesting by the hope that this or that person may come under their heel. Which is pleasantest, building castles in the air for ourselves, or dungeons in Pandemonium for our enemies? It is well for one half of the human race that the other has not the disposal of them. More rare, more grotesque, more exquisitely fiendish, is that sport with the mysteries of agony, that lust of torture, that constitute the desire and the fruition of some monstrous souls.

Now, having ended that beetle's brief life in eternal darkness, and reduced all his thoughts and yearnings to cipher, and dissolved his persevering and resolute little character, never to be recombined, this young gentleman looked up among the yellow leaves in which the birds were chirping their evening gossip, and treated them to a capital imitation of a wild-cat, followed by a still happier one of a screech-owl, which set all the sparrows in the ivy round twittering in panic; and having sufficiently amused himself, the sun being now near the horizon, he bethought him of his mission to Malory. So on he marched whistling an air from an opera, which, I am bound to admit, he did with the brilliancy and precision of a little flageolet, in so much that it amounted to quite a curiously

pretty accomplishment, and you would have wondered how a gentleman with so unmistakable a vein of the miscreant in him, could make such sweet and bird-like music.

A little boy riding a tired donkey into Cardyllian, pointed out to him the gate of the old place, and with a jaunty step, twirling his cane, and whistling as he went, he reached the open space before the door-steps.

The surly servant who happened to see him as he hesitated and gaped at the windows, came forth, and challenged him with tones and looks the reverse of hospitable.

"Oh! Mrs. Mervyn?" said he; "well, she doesn't live here. Get ye round that corner there, and you'll see the steward's house with a hatch-door to it, and you may ring the bell, and leave, d'ye mind, by the back way. You can follow the road by the rear o' the house."

So saying, he warned him off peremptorily with a flunkey's contempt for a mock gentleman, and the sallow man with the black eyes and beard, not at all put out by that slight treatment, for he had seen all sorts of adventures, and had learned unaffectedly to despise contempt, walked listlessly round the corner of the old house, with a somewhat knock-kneed and ungainly stride, on which our bandy friend sneered gruffly.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MR. LEVI VISITS MRS. MERVYN.

And now the stranger stood before the steward's house, which is an old stone building, just two stories high, with but few rooms, and heavy stone shafts to the windows, with little diamond lattices in them, all stained and gray with age—antiquaries assign it to the period of Henry VII.—and when the Jewish gentleman, his wide, loose mouth smiling in solitary expectation, slapped and rattled his cane upon the planks of the hatch, as people in old times called "house!" to summon the servants, he was violating the monastic silence of a building as old as the by-gone friars, with their matin bells and solemn chants.

A little Welsh girl looked over the clumsy bannister, and ran up with his message to Mrs. Mervyn.

"Will you please come up stairs, sir, to the drawing-room?" asked the child.

He was amused at the notion of a "drawing-room" in such a place, and with a lazy sneer climbed the stairs after her.

This drawing-room was very dark at this hour, except for the patch of red light that came through the lattice and rested on the old cupboard opposite, on which stood, shelf above shelf, a grove of colored delft candlesticks, tea-cups, jugs, men, women, tea-pots, and beasts, all in an old-world style, a decoration which prevails in humble Welsh chambers, and which here was a property of the house forgotten, I presume, by the great house of Verney, and transmitted from tenant to tenant, with the lumbering furniture.

The flighty old lady, Mrs. Mervyn of the large eyes, received him with an old-fashioned politeness and formality which did not in the least embarrass her visitor, who sat himself down, smiling his moist, lazy smile, with his knees protruded under the table, on which his elbows rested, and with his heels on the rung of his chair, while his hat and cane lay glimmering in the sun-light beside him.

"The maid, I think, forgot to mention your name, sir?" said the old lady gently, but in a tone of inquiry.

"Very like, ma'am—very like, indeed—because, I think, I forgot to mention my name to her," he drawled pleasantly. "I've taken a deal of trouble—I have—to find you out, ma'am, and two hundred and twenty-five miles here, ma'am, and that same back again—a journey of four hundred and fifty miles—is not just nothing. I'm glad to see you, ma'am—happy to find you in your drawing-room, ma'am—hope you find yourself well, ma'am, as your numerous friends could wish you. My name, ma'am, is Levi, being junior governor of the firm of Goldshed & Levi, well known on 'Change, ma'am, and justly appreciated by a large circle of friends, as you may read upon this card."

The card which he tendered did not, it must be allowed, speak of these admiring friends, but simply announced that "Goldshed & Levi" were "Stock-Brokers," pursuing their calling at "Offices — 10, Scroop Street, Gimmel Lane," in the City. And having held this card before her eyes for a sufficient time, he put it into his pocket.

"You see, ma'am, I've come all this way from our house, to ask you whether you would like to hear some news of your governor, ma'am?"

"Of whom, sir?" inquired the tall old lady, who had remained standing all this time, as she had received him, and was now looking at him with eyes, not of suspicion, but of undisguised fear.

"Of your husband, ma'am, I mean," drawled he, eyeing her with his cunning smile.

"You don't mean, sir—" said she faintly, and thereupon she was seized with a trembling, and sat down, and her very lips turned white, and Mr. Levi began to think "the old girl was looking uncommon queerish," and did not like the idea of "its happening," under these circumstances.

"There, ma'am — don't take on! Where's the water? Da-a-a-mn the drop!" he exclaimed, turning up mugs and jugs in a flurry. "I say—Mary Anne—Jane—chick-a-biddy—girl—be alive there, will ye?" howled the visitor over the bannister. "Water, can't ye? Old woman's sick!"

"Better now, sir—better—just open that—a little air, please," the old lady whispered.

With some hurried fumbling he succeeded in getting the lattice open.

"Water, will you? What a time you're about it, da-a-am little beast!" he bawled in the face of the child.

"Much better, thanks—very much better," whispered the old lady.

"Of course, you're better, ma'am. Here it is at la-a-ast. Have some water, ma'am? Do. Give her the water, you little fool."

She sipped a little.

"Coming round—all right," he said tenderly. "What cattle them old women are! da-a-am them." A little pause followed.

"A deal better now, ma'am?"

"I'm startled, sir."

"Of course, you're startled, ma'am."

"And faint, sir."

"Why not, ma'am?"

Mrs. Rebecca Mervyn breathed three or four great sighs, and began to look again like a living woman.

"Now she looks quite nice (he pronounced it ni-i-ishe), doesn't she? You may make tracksh young woman; go, will you?"

"I feel so much better," said the old lady when they were alone.

"You do—quite—ever so much better. Shall I go on?"

"Pray do, sir."

"Well now see, if I do, there must be no more of that, old lady. If you can't talk of the governor, we'll just let him alone," said Levi sturdily.

"For God's sake, sir, if you mean my husband, tell me all you know."

"All aint a great deal, ma'am; but a cove has turned up as knew him well."

"Some one who knew him?"

"Just so, ma'am." He balanced whether he should tell her that he was dead or not, but decided that it would be more convenient, though less tragic, to avoid getting up a new scene like the other, so he modified his narrative. "He's turned up, ma'am, and knew him very intimate; and has got a meogny (he so pronounced mahogany) desk of his, gave in charge to him, since he could not come home at present, containing a law paper, ma'am, making over to his son and yours some property in England."

"Then, he is not coming?" said she.

"Not azh I knowzh, ma'am."

"He has been a long time away," she continued.

"So I'm informed, ma'am," he observed.

"I'll tell you how it was, and when he went away."

"Thank ye, ma'am," he interposed. "I've heard — melancholy case, ma'am; got seven penn'orth, didn't he, and never turned up again?"

"Seven what, sir?"

"Seven years, ma'am; seven penn'orth we call it ma'am, familiar-like."

"I don't understand you, sir—I don't know what it means; I saw him sail away. It went off, off, off."

"I'll bet a pound it did, ma'am," said Mr. Levi.

"Only to be for a very short time; the sail—I could see it very far—how pretty they look on the sea; but very lonely, I think—too lonely."

"A touch of solitary, ma'am," acquiesced Levi.

"Away, in the yacht," she dreamed on.

"The royal yacht, ma'am, no doubt."

"The yacht, we called it. He said he would return next day; and it went round Pendillion—round the headland of Pendillion, I lost it, and it never came again; but I think it will, sir—don't you? I'm sure it will—he was so confident; only smiled and nodded, and he said, 'No, I won't say good-bye.' He would not have said that if he did not mean to return—he could not so deceive a lonely poor thing like me, that adored him."

"No he couldn't, ma'am, not he: no man could. Betray the girl that adored him! Ba-a-ah! impossible," replied Mr. Levi, and shook his glossy ringlets sleepily, and dropped his eyelids, smiling. This old girl amused him, her romance was such a joke. But the light was perceptibly growing more dusky, and business must not wait upon fun, so Mr. Levi said—

"He'sh no shicken by this time, ma'am—your son, ma'am; I'm told he'sh twenty-sheven yearsh old — thatsh no shicken — twenty-sheven next birthday."

"Do you know any thing of him, sir? Oh, no, he doesn't," she said, looking dreamily with her great sad eyes upon him.

"Jest you tell me, ma'am, where was he baptized, and by what name?" said her visitor.

A look of doubt and fear came slowly and wildly into her face as she looked at him.

"Who is he—I've been speaking to you, sir?"

"Oh! yesh, mo-o-ost *beautiful*, you 'av, ma'am," answered he; "and I am your son's best friend—and yours, ma'am; only you tell me where to find him, and he'sh a made man, for all hizh dayzh."

"Where has he come from?—a stranger," she murmured.

"I *told* you, ma'am."

"I don't know you, sir; I don't know your name," she dreamed on.

"Benjamin Levi. I'll *spell* it for you if you like," he answered, beginning to grow testy. "I told you my name, and showed you my ca-a-ard. Bah! it ravels at one end, as fast as it knits at the other."

And again, he held the card of the firm of Goldshed & Levi, with his elbows on the table, between the fingers of his right and left hand, bowed out like an old-fashioned shop-board, and looking as if it would spring out elastically into her face.

"*There*, ma'am, that'sh the ticket!" said he, eyeing her over it.

"Once, sir, I spoke of business to a stranger, and I was always sorry; I did mischief," said the old woman with a vague remorsefulness.

"I'm *no* stranger, ma'am, begging your pardon," he replied insolently; "you don't half know what you're saying, I do think. Goldshed & Levi—not know us; sich precious rot, I *never!*"

"I did mischief, sir."

"I only want to know where to find your son, ma'am, if you know, and if you won't tell, you *ruin* that poor young man. It ain't a pound to me, but it'sh a deal to him," answered the good-natured Mr. Levi.

"I'm very sorry, sir, but I once did mischief by speaking to a gentleman whom I didn't know. Lady Verney made me promise, and I'm sure she was right, never to speak about business without first consulting some member of her family. I don't understand business—never did," pleaded she.

"Well, here's a go! not understaan'? Why, there's *nothing* to understaan'. It isn't business. S-o-n," he spelt, "*son*. H-u-s-b-a-n-d—*uzbaan*'—that ain't business—da-a-am me! *Where's* the business? Baah!"

"Sir," said the old lady, drawing herself up, "I've answered you. It was about my husband—God help me—I spoke before, and did mischief without knowing it. I won't speak of him to strangers, except as Lady Verney advises—to any stranger—especially to you, sir."

There was a sound of steps outside, which, perhaps, modified the answer of Mr. Levi. He was very much chagrined, and his great black eyes looked very wickedly upon her helpless face.

"Ha, ha, ha! as you please, ma'am. It isn't the turn of a shilling to *me*, but you *ru*-in the *poo-or* young man, your son, for da-a-am me, if I touch his bushinesh again, if it falls through *now*; mind you *that*. So having *ruined* your own flesh and blood, you tell me to go as I came. It's *nauthing* to me—mind that—but ru-in to him; here's my hat and stick—I'm going, only just I'll give you one chance more for that poor young man, just a minute to think again." He had stood up, with his hat and cane in his hand. "Just one chance—you'll be sending for me again, and I won't come. No—no—never, da-a-am me!"

"Good-evening, sir," said the lady.

Mr. Levi bit his thumb nail.

"You don't know what you're doing, ma'am," said he, trying once more.

"I can't, sir—I *can't*," she said distractedly.

"Come, think—I'm going—*going*; just think—what do you shay?"

He waited.

"I won't speak, sir."

"You won't?"

"No, sir."

He lingered for a moment, and the red sunlight showed like a flush of anger on his sallow face. Then, with an insolent laugh, he turned, sticking his hat on his head, and walked down the stairs, singing.

Outside the hatch, he paused for a second.

"I'll get it all another way," he thought. "Round here," he said, "wasn't it—the back way. Good-evening, you stupid, old, da-a-am, crazy cat," and he saluted the windows of the steward's house with a vicious twitch of his cane.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MR. BENJAMIN LEVI RECOGNIZES AN ACQUAINTANCE.

Mr. Benjamin Levi, having turned the corner of the steward's house, found himself before two great piers, passing through the gate of which he entered the stable-yard, at the farther side of which was a second gate, which he rightly conjectured would give him access to that back avenue through which he meant to make his exit.

He glanced round this great quadrangle, one end of which was overlooked by the rear of the old house, and that quaint old refectory with its clumsy flight of stone steps, from the windows of which our friend Sedley had observed the ladies of Malory while engaged in their garden work.

There was grass growing between the paving stones, and moss upon the walls, and the stable doors were decaying upon their rusty hinges. Commenting, as so practical a genius naturally would, upon the surrounding capabilities and decay, Mr. Levi had nearly traversed this solitude when he heard some one call, "Thomas Jones!" twice or thrice, and the tones of the voice arrested him instantly.

He was a man with a turn for musical business, and not only dabbled in concerts and little operatic speculations, but, having a naturally musical ear, had a retentive memory for voices—and this blind man's faculty stood him in stead here, for, with a malicious thrill of wonder and delight, he instantly recognized this voice.

The door of that smaller yard which is next the house opened now, and Sir Booth Fanshawe entered, bawling with increased impatience—"Thomas Jones!"

Sir Booth's eye lighted on the figure of Mr. Levi, as he stood close by the wall at the other side, hoping to escape observation.

With the same instinct Sir Booth stepped backward hastily into an open stable door, and Mr. Levi skipped into another door, within which, unfortunately, a chained dog, Neptune, was dozing.

The dog flew the length of his tether at Mr. Levi's legs, and the Jewish gentleman sprang forth more hastily even than he had entered.

At the same moment, Sir Booth's pride determined *his* vacillation, and he strode boldly forward and said—

"I think I know you sir; don't I?"

As there was still some little distance between them, Mr. Levi affected near-sightedness, and, compressing his eyelids, smiled dubiously, and said—

"Rayther think not, sir. No, sir—I'm a stranger; my name is Levi—of Goldshed & Levi—and I've been to see Mrs. Mervyn, who lives here, about her young man. I don't know you, sir—no—it is a mishtake."

"No, Mr. Levi—you *do* know me—by—you do," replied Sir Booth, approaching, while his fingers clutched at his walking-stick with an

uneasy gripe, as if he would have liked to exercise it upon the shoulders of the Israelite.

"Oh! crikey! Ay, to be sure—why, it's Sir Booth Fanshawe! I beg pardon, Sir Booth. We thought you were in France; but no matter, Sir Booth Fanshawe, none in the world, for all that little bushiness is blown over, quite. We have no interest—no more than your horse—in them little securities, by—; we sold them two months ago to Sholomons; we were glad to sell them to Sholomons, daam him; he hit us hard with some of Wilbraham & Cumming's paper, and I don't care, by—, if he never sees a shilling of it—we would rather *like* it." And Mr. Levi again made oath to that confession of feeling.

"Will you come into the house and have a glass of sherry or something?" said Sir Booth on reflection.

"Well, I don't mind," said Mr. Levi.

And in he went and had a glass of sherry and a biscuit, and grew friendly and confidential.

"Don't you be running up to town, Sir Booth—Sholomons is looking for you. Clever man, Sholomons, and you should get quietly out of this country as soon as you conveniently can. He thinks you're in France now. He sent Rogers—you know Rogers?"

He paused so long here that Sir Booth had to answer "No."

"Well, he sent him—a good man, Rogers, you know, but drinks a bit—after you to Vichy, ha, ha, ha! By—, it was rich. Daam Sholomons. It was worth a pound to see his face—ugly fellow. You know Sholomons?"

And so Mr. Levi entertained his host, who neither loved nor trusted him, and at his departure gave him all sorts of friendly warnings, and sly hints, and walked and ran partly to the "George," and got a two-horse vehicle as quickly as they could harness the horses, and drove at great speed to Lluinan, where he telegraphed to his partner to send a writ down by next train for Sir Booth, the message being from Benjamin Levi, George Inn, Cardyllian, to Goldshed & Levi, etc., etc., London.

Mr. Levi took his ease in his inn, sipped a good deal of brandy and water, and smoked many cigars, with a serene mind and pleasant anticipations, for, if nothing went wrong, the telegram would be in his partner's hand in ample time to enable him, with his accustomed diligence, to send down a "beak" with the necessary documents by the night train, who would reach Cardyllian early, and pay his little visit at Malory by nine o'clock in the morning.

Mr. Levi, as prosperous gentlemen will, felt his solitude, though luxurious, too dull for the effervescence of his spirits, and having questioned his host as to the amusements of Cardyllian, found that its normal resources of that nature were confined to the billiard and reading-rooms, where, on payment of a trifling benefaction to the institution, he enjoyed, as a "visitor," the exhilarating privileges of a member of the Club.

In the billiard-room, accordingly, that night, was the fragrance of Mr. Levi's cheroot agreeably perceptible, the sonorous drawl of his peculiar accent vocal among pleasanter intonations, and his "cuts," "double doubles," and "long crosses," painfully admired by the gentlemen whose shillings he pocketed at pool. And it was pleasant to his exquisitely commercial genius to think that the contributions of the gentlemen to whom he had "given a lesson," and whose "eyes he had opened," would constitute a fund sufficient to pay his expenses at the "George," and even to leave something toward his return fare to London.

The invalid who was suffering from asthma in the bedroom next his was disturbed by his ejaculations as he undressed, and by his repeated bursts of laughter, and rang his bell and implored the servant to beg of the gentlemen who were conversing in the next room to make a little less noise, in consideration of his indisposition.

The manner in which he had "potted" the gentlemen in the billiard-room, right and left, and the uncomfortable admiration of his successes exhibited in their innocent countenances, had, no doubt, something to do with these explosions of merriment. But the chief source of his amusement was the anticipated surprise of Sir Booth, when the little domiciliary visit of the next morning should take place, and the recollection of his own adroitness in mystifying the Baronet.

So he fell into a sweet slumber, uncrossed by even an ominous dream, not knowing that the shrewd old bird for whom his chaff was spread and his pot simmering had already flown with the scream of the whistle on the wings of the night train to Chester, and from that centre to an unknown nook, whence, in a day or two more, he had flitted to some continental roost, which even clever Mr. Levi could not guess.

Next morning early, the ladies were on their way to London, through which they were to continue their journey, and to join Sir Booth abroad.

Two persons were, therefore, very much disappointed next day at Malory; but it could not be helped. One was Cleve Verney, who tried the inexorable secrecy of the servant in every way, but in vain; possibly because the servant did not himself know where "the family" were gone. The other was Mr. Benjamin Levi, who resented Sir Booth's selfish duplicity with an exasperation which would hardly have been appeased by burning that "daam' old mizzled bankrupt robber" alive.

Mr. Levi flew to Chester with his "beak" in a third-class carriage, and thence radiated telegraphic orders and entreaties affecting Sir Booth wherever he had a friend, and ready, on a hint by the wires, to unleash his bailiff on his track, and fix him on the soil, immovable as the petrified witch of Mucklestane Muir, by the spell of his parchment legend.

But no gleam of light rewarded his labors. It was enough to ruffle even Mr. Levi's temper, which, accordingly, *was* ruffled. To have been

so near! To have had his hand, as it were, upon the bird. If he had only had the writ himself in his pocket he might have dropped, with his own fingers, that grain of salt upon his tail. But it was not to be. At the moment of possession, Mr. Levi was balked. He could grind curses under his white teeth, and did not spare them now. Some of them were, I dare say, worthy of that agile witch, "Cuttie Sark," as she stood baffled on the keystone of the bridge, with Meggie's severed tail in her quivering gripe.

In the mean time, for Cleve Verney, Malory is stricken with a sudden blight. Its woods are enchanted no longer; it is dark now, and empty. His heart aches when he looks at it.

He missed his accustomed walk with the Etherage girls. He wrote to tell old Vane Etherage that he was suffering from a severe cold, and could not dine with him, as he had promised. The cold was a lie—but was he really well? Are the spirits no part of health; and where were his?

About a fortnight later, came a letter from his good friend, Miss Sheckleton. How delightfully interesting, though it contained next to nothing. But how interesting! How often he read it through! How every solitary moment was improved by a glance into it!

It was a foreign letter. It would be posted, she said, by a friend in Paris. She could not yet tell, even to a friend so kind as he, the address which would find them. She hoped, however, *very* soon to be at liberty to do so. *All* were well. Her young friend had never alluded since to the subject of the last painful interview. *She*, Miss Sheckleton, could not, unless a favorable opening presented, well invite a conversation on the matter. She had no doubt, however, that an opportunity would occur. She understood the peculiar character of her beautiful young cousin, and saw a difficulty, and even danger, in pressing the question upon her, possibly prematurely. When he, Cleve, wrote—which she supposed he would so soon as he was in possession of her address—he could state exactly what he wished her to say. Meanwhile, although as she had before hinted, dear Margaret was admired and *sought* by a man both of rank and fortune, with very great constancy (she thought it not improbable that Cleve had already suspected that affair), there was in *her* opinion nothing to apprehend, at least at present, in that gentleman's suit—flattered, of course, she must be by a constancy so devoted; but she hardly thought there was a chance that the feeling would grow to any thing beyond *that*. So she bid God bless him, and wrote Anne Sheckleton at the foot of the page.

The physician who, mistaking a complaint, administers precisely the concoction which debilitates the failing organ, or inflames the tortured nerve, commits just such an innocent cruelty as good Miss Sheckleton practiced, at the close of her letter, upon Cleve Verney.

She had fancied that he knew something of the suit to which she referred for the purpose of relieving an anxiety to which her thoughtful allusion introduced him, in fact, for the first time.

Who was this faithful swain? He knew enough of Sir Booth Fanshawe's surroundings, his friends and intimates, to count up four, or five, or six possible rivals. He knew what perseverance might accomplish, and absence might undo, and his heart was disquieted within him.

If he had consulted his instinct, he would have left Ware forthwith, and pursued to the Continent, and searched every town in France; but he could not act quite according to impulse. He had told the Cardyllian people that he was not to leave Ware till the fourteenth; would no remark attend his sudden departure, following immediately upon the mysterious flitting of the Malory people? He knew what wonderful stories might thereupon arise in Cardyllian, and how sure they would be, one way or another, to reach his uncle Kiffyn, and how that statesman's suspicions might embarrass him. Then a letter might easily reach Ware while he was away, and be lost, or worse.

So he resolved to see out the rest of his time where he was. In Cardyllian Church, how dark and cold looked the cavity of the Malory pew! The saints and martyrs in the great eastern window were subdued, and would not glow, and their glories did not burn, but only smouldered that day. And oh! how long was Doctor Splayfoot's sermon! And how vague was his apprehension of the "yarn" to which Miss Charity Etherage treated him all the way from the church porch to the top of Castle Street.

He was glad when the fifteenth, which was to call him away from Ware, approached. He was glad to leave this changed place, glad to go to London—*anywhere*.

Just as all was ready for his flight by the night train, on the evening of the 14th, to his great joy came a letter, a note almost, so short, from kind Anne Sheckleton.

All—underlined—were well. There was nothing more, in fact, but one satisfactory revelation, which was the address which would now find them.

So Cleve Verney made the journey to London that night in better spirits.

CHAPTER XXX.

A COUNCIL OF THREE.

MESSRS. GOLDSHED & LEVI have a neat office in Leadenhall Street. As stock-brokers, strictly, they don't, I am told, do any thing like so large a business as many of their brethren. Those brethren, for the most part, are not proud of them. Their business is of a somewhat contraband sort. They have been examined once or twice uncomfortably before Parliamentary Committees. They have been savagely handled by the great Mr. Hackle, the Parliamentary counsel. In the great insurance case of "The Executors

of Shakerly *v.* The Philanthropic Union Company," they were hideously mangled and eviscerated by Sergeant Bilhooke, whose powers are well known. They have been called "harpies," "ghouls," "Madagascar bats," "vermin," "wolves," and "mousing owls," and are nothing the worse of it. Some people think, on the contrary, rather the better, as it has helped to advertise them in their particular line, which is in a puffing, rigging, fishy, speculative, "queerish" business, at which moral stock-brokers turn up their eyes and noses, to the amusement of Messrs. Goldshed & Levi, who have—although the sober office in Leadenhall Street looks sometimes a little neglected—no end of valuable clients, of the particular kind whom they covet, and who frequent the other office, in Wormwood Court, which looks so dirty, mean, and neglected, and yet is the real seat of power.

The "office" in Wormwood Court is an old-fashioned, narrow-fronted, dingy house. It stands apart, and keeps its own secrets, having an uninhabited warehouse at one side, and a shabby timber-yard at the other. In front is a flagged court-yard, with dingy grass sprouting here and there, and lines of slimy moss, grimed with soot.

The gate is, I believe, never opened—I don't know that its hinges would work now. If you have private business with the firm on a wet day, you must jump out of your cab in the street, and run up through the side door, through the rain, over the puddled flags, and by the famous log of mahogany which the Messrs. Goldshed & Levi and their predecessors have sold, in bill transactions, nearly six thousand distinct times, without ever losing sight of it.

In the street this day there stood a cab at that door. Mr. Jos. Larkin, the Gylingden attorney, was in consultation with the firm. They were sitting in "the office," the front room which you enter at your right from the hall. A high, old-fashioned chimney-piece cuts off the far angle of the room, obliquely. It is wainscoted in wood, in tiny square panels, except over the fire-place, where one great panel runs across, and up to the ceiling, with somebody's coat of arms carved in relief upon it. This wood-work has been painted white, long ago, but the tint has degenerated to a cream or buff color, and a good washing would do it no harm. You can see the original oak where the hat-rack was removed, near the window, as also in those places where gentlemen have cut their names or initials.

The window is covered with dust and dirt, beaten by the rain into all sorts of patterns. A chastened light enters through this screen, and you can't see from without who is in the room.

People wonder why Messrs. Goldshed & Levi, with so well appointed an office in Leadenhall Street, will keep this private office in so beggarly a state; without a carpet, only a strip of nearly obliterated oil-cloth on its dirty floor. Along the centre of the room extends a great old, battered, oblong mahogany quadrangle, full of drawers, with dingy brass handles, and having midway a sort of archway, like a bridge under a railway embankment, covered with oil-cloth of an undistinguishable pattern, blotched with old stains of red ink and black, and dribblings of sealing-wax, curling up here and there dustily, where office-knives, in fiddling fingers, had scarred its skin. On the top of this are two clumsy desks. Behind one sits the junior partner, on a high wooden stool, and behind the other the senior, on a battered office-chair, with one of its hair-cloth angles protruding, like the corner of a cocked hat, in front, dividing the short, thick legs of Mr. Goldshed, whose heels were planted on the rungs, bending his clumsy knees, and reminding one of the attitude in which an indifferent rider tries to keep his seat on a restive horse.

Goldshed is the senior in every sense. He is bald, he is fat, he is short. He has gems on his stumpy fingers, and golden chains, in loops and curves, cross the old black velvet waistcoat, which is always wrinkled upward by the habit he has of thrusting his broad, short hands into his trowsers pockets.

At the other side, leaning back in his chair, and offering, he flatters himself, a distinguished contrast to the vulgar persons opposite, sat Mr. Jos. Larkin, of the Lodge, Gylingden. His tall, bald head was thrown a little back; one arm, in its glossy black sleeve, hung over the back of his chair, with his large red knuckles near the floor. His pink eyes wore their meek and dove-like expression; his mouth a little open, in repose; an air of resignation and beatitude, which, together with his well-known elegance, his long, lavender-tinted trowsers, and ribbed silk waistcoat of the same favorite hue, presented a very perfect picture, in this vulgar Jewish setting, of a perfect Christian gentleman.

"If every thing favors, Mr. Goldshed, Mr. Dingwell may be in town to-morrow evening. He sends for me immediately on his arrival, to my quarters, you understand, and I will send him on to you, and you to Mrs. Sarah Rumble's lodgings."

"*Mish* Rumble," drawled Goldshed; "not married—a *girl, Mish.*"

"Yes, *Mrs.* Rumble," continued Larkin, gently; "there's no harm in saying Mrs.; many ladies in a position of responsibility prefer that style to *Miss*, for obvious reasons."

Here Goldshed, who was smiling lazily, winked at his junior, who returned that signal in safety, for Mr. Larkin, whose countenance was raised toward the ceiling, had closed his eyes. The chaste attorney's discretion amused them, for Miss Sarah Rumble was an industrious, care-worn girl of two-and-fifty, taciturn, and with a brown pug face, and tresses somewhat silvery.

"We are told by the apostle," continued Mr. Larkin, musingly, "not only to avoid evil, but the appearance of evil. I forgot, however, our religions differ."

"Yash, yash, our religions differ," he says; "they differ, Levi, don't they?"

"Yash, they do," drawled that theologian.

"Yash, they do; we see our way to that," concluded Goldshed.

Larkin sighed.

There was a short silence here. Mr. Larkin opening his pink eyelids, and showing his small, light blue eyes, while he maintained his easy and gentlemanlike attitude.

The senior member of the firm looked down on his desk thoughtfully, and picked at an old drop of sealing-wax with his office-knife, and whistled a few slow bars, and Mr. Levi, looking down also, scribbled the cipher of the firm nineteen times, with flourishes, on a piece of paper.

Mr. Goldshed worked his short thick knees and his heels a little uneasily; the office-chair was growing a little bit frisky, it seemed.

"Nishe shailing, Mr. Larkin, and oh, dear! a great lot of delicashy! What do you think?" said Mr. Goldshed, lifting up the office-knife, with the edge toward the attorney, and letting it fall back two or three times, between his finger thumb, dubiously. "The parties being swells, makesh it more delicate—ticklish—ticklish; do you shinsherely think it's all quite straight?"

"Of course, it's straight. I should hope, Mr. Goldshed, I have never advised any course that was not so," said Mr. Larkin loftily.

"I don't mean religious—law blesh you—I mean *safe*," said Mr. Goldshed, soothingly.

A little pink flush touched the tall, bald forehead of the attorney.

"Whatever is right, sir, is safe; and that, I think, can hardly be wrong—I *hope* not—by which all parties are benefited," said the attorney.

"All parties be da-a-amn — except ourshelves. I'm thinking of myshelf — and Mr. Levi, here—and, of coursh, of *you*. Very much of you," he added, courteously.

Mr. Larkin acknowledged his care by a faint meek bow.

"They're swells," repeated Mr. Goldshed.

"He saysh they're swelsh," repeated Mr. Levi, whose grave look had something of the air of a bully in it, fixing his dark prominent eyes on Mr. Larkin, and turning his cheek that way a little, also. "There's a danger in handling a swell—in them matters especially."

"Suppose theresh a contempt?" said Mr. Goldshed, whose chair grew restive, and required management as he spoke.

"He saysh a *contempt*," repeated Mr. Levi, "or shomething worse—by—"

"I'll guarantee you for twopence, Mr. Levi; and pray consider me, and do *not* swear," urged Mr. Larkin.

"If you guarantee us, with a penalty," began Mr. Levi, who chose to take him literally.

"I said *that*, of *course*, Mr. Levi, by way of illustration only; no one, of course, dreams of guaranteeing another without a proper consideration. I should have hoped you *could* not have misunderstood me. I don't understand guarantees, it is a business I have never touched. I'm content, I hope, with the emoluments of my profession, and what my landed property gives me. I only mean this—that there is no risk. What do *we* know of Mr. Dingwell, that is not perfectly above-board—perfectly? I challenge the world upon *that*. If any thing should happen to fall through, we, surely, are not to blame. At the same time if you—looking at it with your experience—apprehend any risk, of course I couldn't think of allowing you to go on. I can arrange, this evening, and not very far from this house, either."

As Mr. Larkin concluded, he made a feint of rising.

"Baah!" exclaimed Levi. "You don't think we want to back out of thish transhaction, Mr. Larkin? *no*-o-oh! That's not the trick of thish offishe—is it gov'nor? He saysh no."

"No," echoed Goldshed.

"No, never—noways! you hear him!" reiterated Mr. Levi. "In for a penny, in for a pound — in for a shilling, in for a thousand! Baah!—No, never."

"No, noways — never!" reverberated Goldshed, in deep, metallic tones. "But Levi, there, must look an inch or two before his nosh—and sho must I—and sho, my very good friend, Mr. Larkin, must *you*—a bit before your nose. I don't see no great danger. We all know, the Honorable Arthur Verney is *dead*. We are sure of *that*—and all the rest is not worth the odd ha'pensh in that book," and he touched the mighty ledger lying by him, in which millions were entered. "The *rest* is Dingwell's affair."

"Just so, Mr. Goldshed," acquiesced Mr. Larkin. "We go together in that view."

"Da-a-am Dingwell!—what need we care for Dingwell?" tolled out Mr. Goldshed, with his ringing bass.

"Baah!—*da-a-am* him!" echoed the junior.

"Yes—a—quite as you say—but where's the good of imprecation? With *that* exception I quite go with you. It's Dingwell's affair—not *ours*. *We*, of course, go straight—and *I* certainly have no reason to suspect Dingwell of any thing crooked or unworthy."

"Oh, no—baah!—*nothing!*" said Levi.

"Nor I," added Goldshed.

"It'sh delicate — it *izh* delicate — but very promishing," said Mr. Goldshed, who was moistening a cigar in his great lips. "Very—and *no*-thing crooked about it."

"No-thing crooked—*no!*" repeated Mr. Levi, shaking his glossy curls slowly. "But very delicate."

"Then, gentlemen, it's understood—I'm at liberty to assume—that Mr. Dingwell finds one or other of you here whenever he calls after dark, and you'll arrange at once about the little payments."

To which the firm having promptly assented, Mr. Larkin took his leave, and, being a client of consideration, was accompanied to the shabby door-step by Mr. Levi, who, *standing at the* hall door, with his hands in his pockets, nodded slyly to him across the flagged court-yard, into the cab window, in a way which Mr. Jos. Lar-

kin of the Lodge thought by many degrees too familiar.

"Well, *there's* a cove!" said Mr. Levi, laughing lazily, and showing his long rows of ivory fangs, as he pointed over his shoulder, with the point of his thumb, toward the street.

"Rum un!" said Mr. Goldshed, laughing likewise, as he held his lighted cigar between his fingers.

And they laughed together tranquilly for a little, till, with a sudden access of gravity, Mr. Goldshed observed, with a little wag of the head—

"He's da-a-am clever."

"Yash, da-a-am clever!" echoed Levi.

"Not as much green as you'd put your finger on, I tell you, no muff—devilish good lay, as *you* shall see," continued Goldshed.

"Devilish good—no, no muff—nothing green," repeated Mr. Levi, lighting his cigar. "Good head for speculation—might be a bit too clever, I'm thinking," and he winked gently at his governor.

"Believe you, my boy, if we'd let him; but we won't, will we?" drawled Mr. Goldshed, jocosely.

"Not if I knows it," said Mr. Levi, sitting on the table, with his feet on the stool, and smoking toward the wall.

CHAPTER XXXI.

MR. DINGWELL ARRIVES.

MESSRS. GOLDSHED & LEVI owned four houses in Rosemary Court, and Miss Sarah Rumble was their tenant. The court is dark, ancient, and grimy. Miss Rumble let lodgings, worked hard, led an anxious life, and subsisted on a remarkably light diet, and at the end of the year never had a shilling over. Her Jewish landlords used to pay her a visit now and then, to receive the rent, and see that every thing was right. These visits she dreaded; they were grumbling and minatory, and enlivened by occasional oaths and curses. But though it was part of their system to keep their tenants on the alert by perpetual fault-findings and menaces, they knew very well that they got every shilling the house brought in, that Miss Rumble lived on next to nothing, and never saved a shilling, and was, in fact, *their* underfed, overworked, and indefatigable slave.

With the uncomplaining and modest charity of the poor, Sarah Rumble maintained her little orphan niece and nephew by extra labor at needlework, and wonderful feats of domestic economy.

This waste of resources Mr. Levi grudged. He had never done complaining of it, and demonstrating that it could only be accomplished by her holding the house at too low a rent; how else could it be? Why was she to keep other people's brats at the expense of Messrs. Goldshed & Levi? What was the work-house for? This perpetual pressure was a sore trouble to the poor woman, who had come to love the children as if they were her own; and after one of Mr. Levi's minatory visits she often lay awake sobbing, in the terror and yearnings of her unspeakable affection, while its unconscious objects lay fast asleep by her side.

From Mr. Levi, in his accustomed vein, Miss Rumble had received full instruction for the reception and entertainment of her new lodger, Mr. Dingwell. He could not say when he would arrive—neither the day nor the hour—and several days had already elapsed and no arrival had taken place. This evening she had gone down to the "shop," so designated, as if there had been but one in London, to lay out a shilling and seven pence very carefully, leaving her little niece and nephew in charge of the candle and the house, and spelling out their Catechism for next day.

A tapping came to the door, not timid nor yet menacing, a sort of double knock, delivered with a walking-cane; on the whole a sharp but gentlemanlike summons to which the little company assembled there were unused. The children lifted their eyes from the book before them, and stared at the door without answering. It opened with a latch, which without more ado was raised, and a tall, white-haired gentleman, with a stoop and a very brown skin, looked in inquisitively, and said with a smile that was not pleasant, and a voice not loud but somewhat harsh and cold—

"Mrs. or *Miss* Rumble hereabouts, my dears?"

"Miss Rumble; that's aunt, please, sir;" answered the little girl, slipping down from her chair and making a courtesy.

"Well, *she's* the lady I want to speak with, my love; where *is* she?" said the gentleman, glancing round the homely chamber from under his white eyebrows with a pair of cold, light, restless eyes.

"She's—she's—"hesitated the child.

"Not in bed, I see; nor in the cupboard (the cupboard door was open). Is she up the chimney, my charming child?"

"No, sir, please; she's gone to Mrs. Chalk's for the bacon."

"Mrs. Chalk's for the bacon?" echoed the gentleman. "Very good! Excellent woman, excellent bacon, I dare say. But how far away is it?—how soon shall we have your aunt back again?"

"Just round the corner, please, sir; aunt's never no time," answered the child. "Would you please call in again?"

"Charming young lady! so accomplished! Who taught you your grammar? So polite, so *suspicious*. Do you know the meaning of that word, my dear?"

"No, sir, please."

"And I am vastly obliged for your invitation to call again, but I find your company much too agreeable to think of going away; so if you allow me—and do shut that door, my sweet child; many thanks—I'll do myself the honor to sit

down, if I may venture, and continue to enjoy your agreeable conversation, till your aunt returns to favor us with her charming presence and—bacon."

The old gentleman was glancing from under his brows, from corner to corner of this homely chamber; an uneasy habit, not curiosity, and during his ceremonious speech he kept bowing and smiling, and set down a black leather bag, that he had in his hand, on the deal table, together with his walking-cane, and pulled off his gloves and warmed his hands at the tiny bit of fire. When his back was toward them the children exchanged a glance, and the little boy looked frightened, and on the point of bursting into tears.

"*Hish!*" whispered the girl, alarmed, for she could not tell what effect the demonstration might have upon the stranger—"*quiet!*"—and she shook her finger in urgent warning at Jemmie. "A *very* nice gent, as has money for auntie—*there!*"

So the tears that stood in Jemmie's big eyes were not followed by an outcry, and the gentleman, with his hat and outside wrapper on, stood with his back to the little fire, looking, in his restless way, over the children's heads, with his white, cold eyes and the same smile. There was a dreamy idea haunting Lucy Maria's head that this gentleman was very like a white animal she had seen at the Surrey Zoological Gardens when her uncle had treated her to that instructive show, the same sort of cruel grin, and the same restless oscillation before the bars of its cage.

"Hey! so she'll be back again?" said he, recollecting the presence of the two children; "the excellent lady, your aunt, I mean. Superb apartment this is, but it strikes me, hardly sufficiently *lighted*, hey? *One* halfpenny candle, however brilliant, can hardly do justice to such a room; pretty taper, very pretty, isn't it? Such nice mutton fat! my dear young lady, and such a fine long snuff—like a chimney with a Quaker's hat on top of it—you don't see such fine things everywhere! And who's this young gentleman, who enjoys the distinction of being admitted to your salon—a page or what?"

"It's Jemmie, sir; stand up and bow to the gentleman, Jemmie."

Jemmie slipped down on the floor, and made a very alarmed bow, with his great eyes staring deprecatingly in the visitor's face.

"I'm charmed to make your acquaintance. What grace and ease! It's perfectly charming! I'm too much honored, Mr. Jemmie. And so exquisitely got up, too! There's only one little toilet refinement I would venture to recommend. The worthy lady, Mrs. Chalks, who contributes bacon to this house, and, I presume, candles—could, I dare say, also supply another luxury, with which you are not so well acquainted, called *soap*—one of the few perfectly safe cosmetics. Pray try it; you'll find it soluble in water. And ho! reading too? What have you been reading out of that exquisite little volume?"

"Catechism, please, sir," answered the little girl.

"Ho, Catechism? Delightful! What a wonderful people we English are!" The latter reflection was made for his own entertainment, and he laughed over it in an under-tone. "Then your aunt teaches you the art of godliness? You've read about Babel, didn't you?—the accomplishment of getting up to heaven is so nice!"

"Sunday School, sir, please," said the girl.

"Oh, it's *there* you learn it? Well, I shall ask you only one question in your Catechism, and that's the first—what's your name?"

"Lucy Maria."

"Well, Lucy Maria and Mr. Jemmie, I trust your theological studies may render you at last as pious as I am. You know how death and sin came into the world, and you know what they are. Sin is doing any thing on earth that's pleasant, and death's the penalty of it. Did you ever see any one dead, my sweet child—not able to raise a finger or an eyelid? rather a fix, isn't it?—and screwed up in a stenching box to be eaten by worms—all alone, under ground? *You'll* be so, egad, and your friend Jemmie there, perhaps before me—though I'm an old boy. Younkers go off sometimes by the score. I've seen 'em trundled out in fever and plague, egad, lying in rows, like plucked chickens in a poulterer's shop. And they say you have scarlatina all about you *here*, now; bad complaint, you know, that kills the little children. You need not frighten yourselves though, because it *must* happen, sooner or later—die you *must*. It's the penalty, you know, because Eve once eat an apple."

"Yes, sir."

"Rather hard lines on us, isn't it? She ate an apple, and sin and death, and colic—I never eat an apple in consequence—*colic* came into the world, and cider, as a consequence—the worst drink ever invented by the devil. And now go on and learn your Church Catechism thoroughly, and you'll both turn into angels. Upon my life, I think I see the feathers beginning to sprout from your shoulders already. You'll have wings, you know, if all goes right—and tails, for any thing I know."

The little boy looked into his face perplexed and frightened—the little girl, answering his haggard grin with an attempted smile, showed also bewilderment and dismay in her eyes. They were both longing for the return of their aunt.

Childish nature, which is only human nature without its scarf skin, is always afraid of irony. It is not its power, but its treachery that is dreadful—the guise of friendship hiding a baleful purpose underneath. One might fancy the seasoned denizens of Gehenna welcoming, complimenting, and instructing new-comers with these solemn derisions. How children delight in humor! how they wince and quail under irony! Be it ever so rudely fashioned and clumsily handled, still it is to them a terrible

weapon. If children are to be either ridiculed or rebuked, let it be honestly, in direct terms. We should not scare them with this jocularity of devils.

Having thus amused himself with the children for a time, he unlocked his leather bag, took out two or three papers, ordered the little girl to snuff the candle, and pulled it across the table to the corner next himself, and, sitting close by, tried to read, holding the letter almost in the flame, screwing his white eyebrows together, and shifting his position, and that of the candle also, with very little regard to the studious convenience of the children.

He gave it up. The red and smoky light tried his eyes too severely. So, not well pleased, he locked his letters up again.

"Cat's eyes—owls! How the devil they read by it passes my comprehension. Any more candles here—hey?" he demanded with a sudden sharpness that made the children start.

"Three, please, sir."

"Get 'em."

"On the nail in the closet, please, sir."

"Get 'em, d—n it!"

"Closet's locked, please, sir. Aunt has the key."

"Ha!" he snarled, and looked at the children as if he would like to pick a quarrel with them.

"Does your aunt allow you to let the fire out on nights like this—hey? You're a charming young lady, *you*—and this young gentleman, in manners and appearance, every thing the proudest aunt could desire; but I'm curious to know whether either one or other is of the slightest earthly use; and secondly, whether she keeps a birch rod in that closet—hey?—and now and then *flogs* you—ha, ha, ha! The expense of the rod is trifling, the pain not worth mentioning, and soon over, but the moral effects are admirable, better and more durable—take my word for it—than all the catechisms in Paternoster Row."

The old gentleman seemed much tickled by his own pleasantries, and laughed viciously as he eyed the children.

"You did not tell me a fib, I hope, my dear, about your aunt? She's a long time about coming; and, I say, do put a little coal on the fire, will you?"

"Coal's locked up, please, sir," said the child, who was growing more afraid of him every minute.

"'Gad, it seems to me that worthy woman's afraid you'll carry off the bricks and plaster. Where's the poker? Chained to the wall, I suppose; well, there's a complaint called kleptomania—it comes with a sort of irritation at the tips of the fingers, and I should not be surprised if you and your friend Jemmie, there, had got it."

Jemmie looked at his fingers' ends, and up in the gentleman's face, in anxious amazement.

"But there's a cure for it—essence of cane—and if that won't do, a capital charm—nine tails of a gray cat applied under competent direction. Your aunt seems to understand that disorder—it begins with an itching in the fingers, and ends with a pain in the back—ha, ha, ha! You're a pair of theologians, and, if you've read John Bunyan, no doubt understand and enjoy an allegory."

"Yes, sir, please, we will," answered poor Lucy Maria, in her perplexity.

"And we'll be very good friends, Miss Marie Louise, or whatever your name is, I've no doubt, provided you play me no tricks and do precisely whatever I bid you; and, upon my soul, if you don't, I'll take the devil out of my pocket and frighten you out of your wits, I will—ha, ha, ha!—so sure as you live, into *fits!*"

And the old gentleman, with an ugly smile on his thin lips, and a frown between his white eyebrows, fixed his glittering gaze on the child and wagged his head.

You may be sure she was relieved when, at that moment, she heard her aunt's well-known step on the lobby, and the latch clicked, the door opened, and Miss Rumble entered.

CHAPTER XXXII.

MR. DINGWELL MAKES HIMSELF COMFORTABLE.

"AH!—*ho!* you are Miss Rumble—hey?" said the old gentleman, fixing a scrutinizing glance from under his white eyebrows upon Sally Rumble, who stood in the door-way, in wonder, not unmixed with alarm; for people who stand every hour in presence of Giant Want, with his sword at their throats, have lost their faith in fortune, and long ceased to expect a benevolent fairy in any stranger who may present himself dubiously, and anticipate rather an enemy. So, looking hard at the gentleman who stood before the little fire, with his hat on, and the light of the solitary dipped candle shining on his by no means pleasant countenance, she made him a little frightened courtesy, and acknowledged that she was Sally Rumble, though she could not tell what was to follow.

"I've been waiting; I come here to see you—pray, shut the door—from two gentlemen, Jews, whom you know—*friends*—don't be uneasy—friends of *mine*, friends of *yours*—Mr. Goldshed and Mr. Levi, the kindest, sweetest, sharpest fellows alive, and here's a note from them—you can *read?*"

"Read! Law bless you—yes, sir" answered Sally.

"Thanks for the blessing—read the note; it's only to tell you I'm the person they mentioned this morning, Mr. Dingwell. Are the rooms ready? You can make me comfortable—eh?"

"In a humble way, sir," she answered, with a courtesy.

"Yes, of course; I'm a humble fellow, and I hear you're a sensible young lady. These little pitchers here, of course, have ears—I'll say all that's necessary as we go up—there's a fellow with a cab at the door; isn't there? Well, there's some little luggage of mine on it—we must get it up stairs; give him something to lend a hand; but first let me see my rooms."

"Yes, sir," said Sally, with another courtesy. And Mr. Dingwell, taking up his bag and stick, followed her in silence, as with the dusky candle she led the way up the stairs.

She lighted a pair of candles in the drawing-room. There was some fire in the grate. The rooms looked better than he had expected—there were curtains, and an old Turkish carpet, and some shabby and some handsome pieces of furniture.

"It will do, it will do—ha, ha, ha! how like a pawnbroker's store it looks—no two things match in it; but it is not bad—those Jew fellows, of course, did it? All this stuff isn't yours?" said Mr. Dingwell.

"Law bless you, no, sir," answered Sally, with a dismal smile and a shake of her head.

"Thanks again for your blessing. And the bedroom?" inquired he.

She pushed open the door.

"Capital looking-glass," said he, standing before his dressing-table—"cap-i-tal! if it weren't for that great seam across the middle—ha, ha, ha! funny effect, by Jove! Is it colder than usual, here?"

"No, sir, please; a nice evening."

"Devilish nice, by Allah! I'm cold through and through my great coat. Will you please poke up that fire a little? Hey! what a grand bed we've got! what tassels and ropes! and, by Jove, carved angels or *Cupids*—I hope, Cupids—on the foot-board!" he said, running the tip of his cane along the profile of one of them; "they must have got this a wonderful bargain. Hey! I hope no one died in it last week?"

"Oh, la! sir; Mr. Levi is a very pitickler gentleman; he wouldn't for all he's worth."

"Oh! not he, I know; very particular."

Mr. Dingwell was holding the piece of damask curtain between his finger and thumb, and she fancied was sniffing at it gently.

"Very particular, but I'm more so. We English are the dirtiest dogs in the world. They ought to get the Turks to teach 'em to wash and be clean. I traveled in the East once, for a commercial house, and know something of them. Can you make coffee?"

"Yes, sir, please."

"Very strong?"

"Yes, sir, sure."

"Very, mind. As strong as the devil it must be, and as clear as—as your *conscience*." He was getting out a tin case as he spoke. "Here it is. I got it in—I forget the name—a great place, near one of your bridges. I suppose it's as good as any to be had in this place. Of course it isn't *all* coffee. We must go to the *heathen* for that; but if they haven't ground up toasted skeletons, or any thing dirty in it, I'm content. I'm told you can't eat or drink a mouthful here without swallowing something you never bargained for. Every thing is drugged. You d—d Christian cheats, you're an opprobrium to commerce and civilization; you're the greatest oafs on earth, with all your police and spies. Why, it's only to *will* it, and you *don't*; you let it go on. We are assuredly a beastly people!"

"Sugar, please, sir?"

"No, thank you."

"Take milk, sir?"

"Heaven forbid! Milk, indeed! I tell you what, Mrs.—what's your name?—I tell you if the Sultan had some of your great fellows—your grocers, and bakers, and dairymen, and brewers, egad!—out there, he'd have 'em on their ugly faces and bastinado their great feet into custard-pudding! I've seen fellows—and d—d glad I *was* to see it, I can tell you—screaming like stuck pigs, and their eyes starting out of their heads, and their feet like bags of black currant-jelly, ha, ha, ha!—for a devilish deal less. Now, you see, ma'am, I have high notions of honesty; and this tin case I'm going to give you will give me three small cups of coffee, as strong as I have described, six times over: do you understand?—six times three—eighteen:—*eighteen* small cups of coffee; and don't let those pretty little foxes' cubs, down stairs, meddle with it. Tell 'em I know what I'm about, and they'd better not, ha, ha, ha!—not with any thing that belongs to me."

Miss Sarah Rumble was a good deal dismayed by the jubilant severity of Mr. Dingwell's morals. She would have been glad he had been of a less sharp and cruel turn of pleasantry. Her heart was heavy, and she wished herself a happy deliverance, and had a vague alarm about the poor little children's falling under suspicion, and of all that might follow. But what could she do? Poverty is so powerless, and has so little time to weigh matters maturely, or to prepare for any change; its hands are always so full, and its stomach so empty, and its spirits so dull.

"I wish those d—d curtains were off the bed," and again they underwent the same disgusting process; "and the bed-clothes, egad! They purify nothing here. You know *nothing* about *them* either, of course? *No*;—but they would not like to kill me. No—that would not do. Knock their little game on the head, eh? I suppose it *is* all right. What's prevalent here now? What sort of—I mean what sort of *death*—fever or small-pox, or scarlatina—eh? Much sickness going?"

"Nothink a'most, sir; a little measles among the children."

"No objection to that; it heads them down a bit, and does not trouble us. But what among the *grown* people?"

"Nothink to signify in the court here, for three months a'most."

"And *then*, ma'am, what *was* it, pray? Give those to your boy (they were his boots); let him rub 'em up, ma'am, he's not a bit too young to begin; and egad! he had better do 'em *well*, too;" and thrusting his feet into a great pair of slippers, he reverted to his question—"What sickness was *then*, ma'am, three months ago, here in this pleasant little prison-yard of a place—hey?"

"Fever, please, sir, at No. 4. Three took it, please—two of them went to hospital."

"And never walked out?"

"Don't know, indeed, sir—and one died, please, sir, in the court here, and he left three little children."

"I hope they're gone away?"

"Yes, sir, please,"

"Well, that's a release. Rest his soul, he's dead! as our immortal bard, that says every thing so much better than any one else ever did, says; and rest our souls, *they're* gone, with their vile noise. So your bill of mortality is not much to signify; and make that coffee—d'ye see?—this moment, and let me have it as hot as—as the final abode of Dissenters and Catholics—I see you believe in the Church Catechism—immediately, if you please, to the next room."

So, with a courtesy, Sally Rumble tripped from the room, with the coffee-case in her hand.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE LODGER AND HIS LANDLADY.

SALLY was beginning to conceive a great fear of her guest, and terror being the chief spring of activity, in a marvelously short time the coffee was made, and she, with Lucy Maria holding the candle behind her, knocking at what they called the drawing-room door. When, in obedience to his command, she entered, he was standing by the chimney-piece, gazing at her through an atmosphere almost hazy with tobacco smoke. He had got on his dressing-gown, which was pea-green, and a scarlet fez, and stood with his inquisitive smile and frown, and his long pipe a little removed from his lips.

"Oh, it's *you?* yes; no one—do you mind—except Mr. Larkin, or Mr. Levi, or Mr. Goldshed, ever comes in to me—always charmed to see *you*, and *them*—but there ends my public; so, my dear lady, if any person should ask to see Mr. Dingwell, from New York in America, you'll simply say there's no such person here—yes—there's—*no—such—person—here*—upon my honor. And you're no true woman if you don't say so with pleasure—because it's a fib."

Sarah Rumble courtesied affirmatively.

"I forgot to give you this note, my letter of introduction. Here, ma'am, take it, and read it, if you can. It comes from those eminent harpies, the Messrs. Goldshed & Levi—your landlords, aren't they?"

Another courtesy from grave, dark-browed Miss Rumble acknowledged the fact.

"It is pleasant to be accredited by such gentlemen—good landlords, I dare say?"

"I've nothing to say against Mr. Levi; and I'm 'appy to say, sir, my rent's bin always paid up punctual," she said.

"Yes, just so—capital landlord! charming tenant! and I suspect if you didn't, they'd find a way to make you—eh? Your coffee's not so bad—you may make it next time just a degree stronger, bitter as wormwood and verjuice, please—black and bitter, ma'am, as English prejudice. It isn't badly made, however—no, it *is* really *good*. It isn't a common Christian virtue, making good coffee—the Mahometans have a knack of it, and you must be a bit of a genius, ma'am, for I think you'll make it very respectably by to-morrow evening, or at latest, by next year. You shall do every thing well for me, madam. The Dingwells were always d—d flighty, wicked, unreasonable people, ma'am, and you'll find me a regular Dingwell, and *worse*, madam. Look at me—don't I look like a vampire? I tell you, ma'am, I've been buried, and they would not let me rest in my grave, and they've called me up by their d—d incantations, and here I am, ma'am—an evoked spirit. I have not read that bit of paper. How do they introduce me—as Mr. Dingwell, or Mr. Dingwell's ghost? I'm wound up in a sort of way; but I'm deficient in blood, ma'am, and in heat. You'll have to keep the fire up always like *this*, Mrs. Rumble. You better mind, or you'll have me a bit too like a corpse to be pleasant. Egad! I frighten myself in the glass, ma'am. There is what they call transfusion of blood *now*, ma'am, and a very sensible thing it is. Pray, don't you think so?"

"I do suppose what you say's correct, sir."

"When a fellow comes out of the grave, ma'am—that's sherry in that bottle; be kind enough to fill this glass—he's chilly, and he wants blood, Mrs. Rumble. A gallon, or so, transfused into my veins wouldn't hurt me. You can't *make* blood fast enough for the wear and tear of life, especially in a place like merry England, as the poets call it—and merry England is as damp all over as one of your charnel vaults under your dirty churches. Egad! it's enough to make a poor ghost like me turn vampire, and drain those rosy little brats of yours—ha, ha, ha!—*your* children, are they, Mrs. Rumble—eh?"

"No, sir, please—my brother's children."

"Your *brother's*—ho! He doesn't live *here*, I hope?"

"He's dead sir."

"Dead—is he?"

"Five years last May, sir."

"Oh! that's good. And their mother?—some more sherry, please."

"Dead about four years, poor thing! They're orphans, sir, please."

"'Gad! I *do* please; it's a capital arrangement, ma'am, as they *are* here, and you mustn't let 'em among the children that swarm about places like this. Egad! ma'am, I've no fancy for scarlatina or small-pox, or any sort or description of your nursery maladies."

"They're very 'ealthy, sir, I thank you," said grave Sarah Rumble, a little mistaking Mr. Dingwell's drift.

"Very glad to hear it, ma'am."

"Very kind o' you, sir," said she with a courtesy.

"Kind, of course, yes, very kind," he echoed.

"Very 'ealthy, indeed, sir, I'm thankful to say."

"Well, yes, they do look well—for town brats, you know—plump and rosy—d—n 'em, little skins of red wine; egad! enough to make a fellow turn vampire; as I said. Give me a little more sherry—thank you, ma'am. Any place near here where they sell ice?"

"Yes, sir, there's Mr. Candy's hice-store, in Love Lane, sir."

"You must arrange to get me a pound, or so, every day at twelve o'clock, broken up in lumps, like sugar, and keep it in a cold cellar; do you mind, ma'am?"

"Yes sir, please."

"How old are *you*, ma'am? Well, *no*, you need not mind—hardly a fair question; a steady woman—a lady who has seen the world—*some*thing of it, hey?" said he; "so have *I*—I'm a steady old fellow, egad!—you must give me a latch-key, ma'am."

"Yes, sir."

"Some ten or twelve years will see us out; curious thing life, ma'am, eh? ha, ha, ha!—Sparkling cup, ma'am, while it lasts—*some*times; pity the flask has so few glasses, and is flat so soon; isn't it so, ma'am?"

"I never drank wine, sir, but once."

"No! where was that?"

"At Mr. Snelly's wedding, twenty years since."

"'Gad, you'd make a good Turk, ma'am—don't mistake me—it's only they drink no wine. You've found life an up-hill business, then, hey?"

Mrs. Rumble sighed profoundly, shook her head, and said—

"I've 'ad my trials, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha! to be sure, why not; then you're a bit *tired*, I dare say; what do you think of death?"

"I wish I was ready, sir."

"An ugly fellow, hey? I don't like the smell of him, ma'am."

"We has our hopes, sir."

"Oh! sure and certain hope—yes, the resurrection, hey?"

"Yes, sir, there's only one thing troubles me—them poor little children; I wouldn't care how soon I went if they was able to do for themselves."

"They do that very early in London—girls especially; and you're giving them such an excellent training—Sunday school—eh—and Church Catechism, I see. The righteous are never forsaken, my excellent mother used to tell me; and if the Catechism does not make little Miss what's-her-name righteous, I'm afraid the rosy little rogue has a spice of the devil in her."

"God forbid, sir."

"Amen, of course, I'm sure they're all right—I hope they are—for I'll whip 'em both; I give you fair warning, on my honor I will, if they give me the least trouble."

"I'll be very careful, sir, and keep them out of the way," said the alarmed Sarah Rumble.

"Oh! I don't care about *that*; *let* 'em run about, as long as they're good; I've no objection in life to children—quite the contrary—plump little rogues—I like 'em—only, egad! if they're naughty, I'll turn 'em up, mind."

Miss Rumble looked at him with as much alarm as if the threat had been to herself.

He was grinning at her in return, and nodded once or twice sharply.

"Yes, ma'am, lollypops and sugar-candy when they're good; but egad! when they're naughty, ma'am, you'll hear 'em squalling."

Miss Rumble made an alarmed courtesy.

"'Gad, I forgot how cold this d—d town is. I say, you'll keep a fire in my bedroom, please; lay on enough to carry me through the night, do you mind?"

"Yes, sir."

"And poke this fire up, and put some more wood, or coal, on it; I don't expect to be ever warm again—in *this* world, eh?—ha, ha, ha! I remember our gardener, when we were boys, telling me a story of a preacher in a hard frost, telling his congregation that hell was a terribly cold place, lest if he described what good fires they kept there they'd all have been wishing to get into it. Did you ever know any one, ma'am, of my name, *Dingwell*, before, eh? Where were you born?"

"London, sir, please."

"Ho! Canterbury was *our* place; we were great people, the Dingwells, there once. My father failed, though—fortune of war—and I've seen all the world since; 'gad, I've met with queer people, ma'am, and one of those chances brings me here now. If I had not met the oddest fish I ever set my eyes on, in the most out-o'-the-way place on earth, I should not have had the happiness of occupying this charming apartment at this moment, or of making your acquaintance, or that of your plump little Cupid and Psyche, down stairs. London, I suppose, is pretty much what it always was, where any fellow with plenty of money may have plenty of fun. Lots of sin in London, ma'am, eh? Not quite so good as Vienna. But the needs and pleasures of all men, according to their degree, are wonderfully provided for; wherever money is there is a market—for the cabman's copper and the guineas of the gentlemen he drives—every thing for money, ma'am—bouquets, and smiles, and coffins, wooden or leaden, according to your relative fastidiousness. But things change very fast, ma'am. Look at this map. I should not know the town—a wilderness, egad! and no one to tell you where fun is to be found."

She gazed, rather frightened, at this leering, giggling old man, who stood with his shoulders against the chimney-piece, and his hands rumbling over his shillings in his pockets, and his sinister and weary face ever so little flushed with his sherry and his talk.

"Well, if you can give a poor devil a wrinkle of any sort—hey?—it will be a charity; but, egad! I'm as sleepy as the homilies;" and he yawned

direfully. "Do, like an angel, go and see to my room. I can scarcely keep my eyes open."

From the next room she heard him *hi-yeawing* in long-drawn yawns, and talking in snatches to himself over the fire, and when she came back he took the candle and said—

"Beaten, ma'am, fairly beaten to-night. Not quite what I was, though I'm good for something still; but an old fellow can't do without his sleep."

Mr. Dingwell's extraordinary communicativeness would have quite charmed her, had it not been in a faint way racy of corruption, and followed with a mocking echo of insult, which she caught, but could not accurately interpret. The old rascal was irrepressibly garrulous; but he was too sleepy to talk much more, and looked ruefully worn out.

He took the bedroom candle with a great yawn, and staggering, I am bound to say, only with sleep, he leaned for a moment against the door-way of his room, and said, in his grimmer vein—

"You'll bring me a cup of coffee, mind, at eight o'clock—*black*, no milk, no sugar—and a bit of dry toast, as thin as a knife and as hard as a tile; do you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"And why the devil don't you say so? And, lest I should forget, Mr. Levi will be here to-morrow, at eleven, with another gentleman. Show them both up; and, I say, there are several things I'm particular about, and I'll put them on paper—egad! that's the best way—to-morrow, and I'll post it up in my room, like a firmaun, and you had better attend to them, that's all;" and holding up his candle, as he stood in the door-way, he gazed round the bedroom, and seemed satisfied, and shut the door sharply in her face, without turning about, or perhaps intending that rudeness, as she was executing her valedictory courtesy.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

IN WHICH MR. DINGWELL PUTS HIS HAND TO THE POKER.

At eleven o'clock next morning Mr. Dingwell was refreshed, and ready to receive his expected visitors. He had just finished a pipe as he heard their approaching steps upon the stairs, and Miss Sarah Rumble pushed open the door and permitted Mr. Levi and his friend to enter and announce themselves. Mr. Dingwell received them with a slight bow and a rather sarcastic smile.

Mr. Levi entered first, with his lazy smile showing his glittering fangs, and his fierce, cunning, prominent eyes swept the room, and rested on Mr. Dingwell. Putting down his hat on the middle of the narrow table, he stooped across, extending his lank arm and long hand toward the white-headed old man with the broad forehead and lean brown face, who happened to turn to the chimney-piece just then, to look for a paper, and so did not shake hands.

"And Mr. Larkin?" said Mr. Dingwell, with the same smile, as he turned about and saw that slim, bald, pink-eyed impersonation of Christianity overtopping the dark and glossy representative of the Mosaic dispensation.

"Sit down, pray—though—eh?—has my friend, Miss Rumble, left us chairs enough?" said Mr. Dingwell, looking from corner to corner.

"Quite ample; thanks, many thanks," answered Mr. Larkin, who chose, benignantly, to take this attention to himself. "Three chairs, yes, and three of us; pray, Mr. Dingwell, don't take any trouble."

"Oh! thank you; but I was not thinking of taking any trouble, only I should not like to be left without a chair. Miss Sarah Rumble, I dare say she's very virtuous, but she's not brilliant," he continued, as he approached. "*There*, for instance, her pot-house habits! She leaves my old hat on the centre of the table!" and with a sudden sweep of the ebony stem of his long pipe, he knocked Mr. Levi's hat upon the floor, and kicked it into the far corner of the room.

"Da-a-am it; that'sh my hat!" said Mr. Levi, looking after it.

"So much the better for *me*," said Mr. Dingwell, with an agreeable smile and a nod.

"An error—quite a mistake," interposed Mr. Larkin, with officious politeness. "Shall *I* pick it up, Mr. Levi?"

"Leave it lay," said Mr. Levi, sulkily; "no use now. It's got its allowance, I expect."

"Gentlemen, you'll not detain me longer than is necessary, if you please, because I hate business on *principle*, as a Jew does ham—I beg pardon, Mr. Levi, I forgot for a moment—the greatest respect for your religion, but I do hate business as I hate an attorney, or the devil himself—'Gad! there is my foot in it again: Mr. Larkin, no reflection, I assure you, on your excellent profession, which every one respects. But life's made up of hours: they're precious, and I don't want to spoil 'em."

"A great trust, sir, a great trust, Mr. Dingwell, is *time*. Ah, sir, how little we make of it, with eternity yawning at our feet, and retribution before us!"

"*Our* and *us*; you don't narrow it to your own profession, Mr. Larkin?"

"I speak of time generally, Mr. Dingwell, and of eternity, and retribution, as applicable to all professions," said Mr. Larkin, sadly.

"I don't follow you, sir. Here's a paper, gentlemen, on which I have noted exactly what I can prove."

"Can I have it, Mr. Dingwell?" said the attorney, whose dove-like eyes for a moment contracted with a hungry, rat-like look.

"No, I think, *no*," said Mr. Dingwell, withdrawing it from the long, red fingers extended to catch the paper; Mr. Levi's fingers, at a more modest distance, were also extended, and also disappointed; "any thing I write myself I

have a kind of feeling about it; I'd rather keep it to myself, or put it in the fire, than trouble the most artless Jew or religious attorney I know with the custody of it: so, if you just allow me, I'll read it; it's only half a dozen lines, and I don't care if you make a note of it, Mr. Larkin."

"Well," he resumed, after he had glanced through the paper, Mr. Larkin sitting expectant *arrectis auribus*, and with a pen in his fingers, "you may say that I, Mr. Dingwell, knew the late Honorable Arthur Verney, otherwise Hakim Frank, otherwise Hakim Giaour, otherwise Mamhoud Ali Ben-Nezir, for five years and two months, and upward — three days, I think, immediately preceding his death; for the latter four years very intimately. That I frequently procured him small loans of money, and saw him, one way or another, nearly every day of my life: that I was with him nearly twice a day during his last illness: that I was present when he expired, and was one of three persons who saw him buried: and that I could point out his grave, if it were thought desirable to send out persons acquainted with his appearance, to disinter and identify the body."

"No need of that, I think," said Mr. Larkin, looking up and twiddling his eye-glass on his finger.

He glanced at Levi, who was listening intensely, and almost awfully, and, reading no sign in his face, he added—

"*However*, I see no harm in making the note."

So on went Mr. Dingwell, holding a pair of gold glasses over his nose.

"I can perfectly identify him as the Hon. Arthur Verney, having transacted business for him respecting an annuity which was paid him by his family; written letters for him when his hand was affected; and read his letters for him when he was ill, which latter letters, together with a voluminous correspondence found in his box, and now in my possession, I can identify also as having been in *his*."

"I don't see any need, my dear Mr. Dingwell, of your mentioning your having written any letters for him; it has, in fact, no bearing that I can recognize upon the case. I should, in fact, apprehend complicating the case. You might find it difficult to specify, and we to produce, the particular letters referred to; so I should simply say you *read* them to him, at his desire, before he dispatched them for England, that is, of course, assuming that you did so."

"Very good, sir; knock it out, and put that in; and I can prove that these letters, which can easily, I suppose, be identified by the writers of them in England, were in his possession, and that several of them I can recollect his having read to me on the day he received them. That's pretty nearly what strikes me—eh?"

"Yes, sir — certainly, Mr. Dingwell — most important; but surely he had a servant; had he not, my dear sir?—an attendant of some sort? they're to be had there for next to nothing, I think," hesitated Mr. Larkin.

"Certainly—so there was—yes; but he started for Egypt in a boat full of tiles, or onions, or something, a day or two after the Hakim was buried, and I'm afraid they'll find it rather hard to find him. I think he said Egypt, but I won't swear."

And Mr. Dingwell laughed, very much tickled, with intense sarcastic enjoyment; so much so that Mr. Larkin, though I have seldom before or since heard of his laughing, *did* suddenly laugh a short, explosive laugh, as he looked down on the table, and immediately looked very grave and sad, and pinked up to the very summit of his narrow bald head; and coughing a little, he said—

"Thank you, Mr. Dingwell; this will suffice very nicely for an outline, and I can consult with our adviser as to its particular sufficiency —is not that your impression, Mr. Levi?"

"You lawyer chaps undusta-ans that line of business best; I know no more about it than watch-making—only don't shleep over it, for it's costing us a da-a-am lot of money," said Mr. Levi, rising with a long yawn and a stretch, and emphasizing it with a dismal oath; and shutting his great glaring eyes and shaking his head, as if he were being victimized at a pace which no capital could long stand.

"Certainly, Mr. Levi," said the attorney, "you quite take me with you there. We are all contributing, except, perhaps, our valued friend, Mr. Dingwell, our quota toward a very exhausting expense."

"Da-a-md exhausting," interposed Mr. Levi.

"Well, pray allow me my own superlative," said the attorney, with religious grandeur. "I do say it is very exhausting; though we are all, I hope, *cheerfully* contributing—"

"D—n you; to be sure you are," said Mr. Dingwell, with an abrupt profanity that startled Mr. Larkin. "Because you all expect to make money by it; and I'm contributing my time and trouble, and danger, egad! for precisely the same reason. And now, before you go—just a moment, if you please, as we are on the subject —who's Chancellor of the Exchequer here?"

"Who advances the necessary funds?" interpreted Mr. Larkin, with his politest smile.

"Yes," said the old man, with a sharp menacing nod. "Which of you two comes down as you say, with the dust? Who pays the piper for this dance of yours, gentlemen?—the Christian or the Jew? I've a word for the gentleman who holds the purse—or, as we Christians would say, who carries the bag;" and he glanced from one to the other with a sniff, and another rather vicious wag of his head.

"I believe, sir, you may address us both as *voluntary* contributors toward a fund for carrying on, for the *present*, this business of the Honorable Kiffyn Fulke Verney, who *will*, of course recoup us," said Mr. Larkin, cautiously.

He used to say sometimes to his conducting man, with a smile, sly and holy, up at the yellow letters of one of the tin deed-boxes on his shelves at the Lodge, after an adroit conversation, "I

think it will puzzle him, rather, to make an *assumpsit* out of *that*."

"Well, you talk of *allowing* me—as you term it—four pounds a week. I'll not take it," said Mr. Dingwell, viciously.

"My hye! That'sh liberal, shir, da-a-am 'anshome, be-Ga-a-ad!" exclaimed Mr. Levi, in a blessed mistake as to the nature of Mr. Dingwell's objection.

"I know, gentlemen, this business can't advance without me—to me it may be worth something; but you'll make it worth a great deal more to yourselves, and whatever you may find me, you'll find me no fool; and I'll not take one penny less than five-and-twenty pounds a week.

"Five-and-twenty pounsh!" howled Mr. Levi; and Mr. Larkin's small pink eyes opened wide at the prodigious idea.

"You gentlemen fancy you're to keep me here in this black hole making *your* fortunes, and living on the wages of a clerk, egad! You shall do no such thing, I promise you; you shall pay me what I say. I'll see the town, sir, and I'll have a few guineas in my pocket, or I'll know the reason why. I didn't come ALL the way here for nothing—d—n you both!"

"Pray, sir, a moment," pleaded Mr. Larkin.

"*Pray*, sir, as much as you like; but *pay*, also, if you please. Egad! you *shall*. Fortune owes me something, and egad! I'll enjoy while I can."

"Of course, sir; quite reasonable—so you should; but, my dear Mr. Dingwell, five-and-twenty pounds!—we can hardly be expected, my dear sir, to see our way."

"'Gad, sir, *I* see *mine*, and I'll go it," laughed Mr. Dingwell, with a most unpleasant glare in his eyes.

"On reflection, you will see, my dear Mr. Dingwell, the extreme inexpediency of any thing in the least resembling a *fracays* (Mr. Larkin so pronounced his French) in your particular case. I should certainly, my dear sir, recommend a most cautious line."

"Cauteous as the devil," seconded Mr. Levi.

"You think I'm afraid of my liabilities," croaked Mr. Dingwell, with a sudden flush across his forehead, and a spasm of his brows over his wild eyes, and then he laughed, and wagged his head.

"That's right—quite right," almost sighed Mr. Larkin—"do—do—*pray* do—just *reflect* for only a *moment*—and you'll *see* it."

"To be sure, I *see* it, and *you* shall see it, too. Egad, I know something, sir, at my years. I know how to deal with screws, and bullies, and schemers, sir—and that is by *going straight at* them—and I'll tell you what, sir, if you don't pay me the money I name, I'll make you regret it."

For a moment Mr. Larkin, for one, did almost regret his share in this uncomfortable and highly "speculative" business. If this Mr. Dingwell chose to turn restive and extortionate, it would have been better it had never entered into his ingenious head, and he could already see in the Jew's eyes the sulky and ferocious expression that seemed to forebode defeat.

"If you don't treat me, as I say, with common fairness, I'll go straight to young Mr. Verney myself, and put you out of the baby-house altogether."

"*What* babby-houshe?" demanded Mr. Levi, glowering, and hanging the corners of his great half-open mouth with a sullen ferocity.

"Your castle—in the air—your d—d plot, sir."

"If you mean you're going to turn stag," began the Jew.

"*There*—do—pray, Mr. Levi—you—you *mistake*," interposed Mr. Larkin imploringly, who had heard tales of this Mr. Dingwell's mad temper.

"I say," continued Levi, "if you're going to split—"

"Split, sir?" cried Mr. Dingwell, with a malignant frown, and drawing his mouth together into a puckered ring, as he looked askance at the Jew. "What the devil do you mean by *split*, sir? 'Gad! sir, I'd split your d—d black head for you, you little Jew miscreant!"

Mr. Larkin saw with a qualm that the sinews of that evil face were quivering with an insane fury, and that even under its sun-darkened skin it had turned pale, while the old man's hand was instinctively extended toward the poker, of which he was thinking, and which was uncomfortably near.

"No, no, *no*—pray, gentlemen—I *entreat*—only *think*," urged Mr. Larkin, seriously alarmed for the Queen's peace and his own precious character.

Mr. Larkin confronted the Jew, with his great hands upon Mr. Levi's shoulders, so as to prevent his advance; but that slender Hebrew, who was an accomplished sparrer, gave the godly attorney a jerk by the elbows which quite twirled him about, to his amazement and chagrin.

"'Andsh off, old chap," said the Jew, grimly, to Mr. Larkin, who had not endured such a liberty since he was at his cheap day-school, nearly forty years ago.

But Mr. Larkin interposed again, much alarmed, for behind him he thought he heard the clink of the fire-irons.

"He thinks he may say what he pleases," cried the old man's voice furiously, with a kind of choking laugh.

"No, sir—no, Mr. Dingwell—I assure you—*do*, Mr. Levi—how *can* you mind him?" he added in an undertone, as he stood between.

"I *don't* mind him, Mr. Larkin; only I won't let no one draw it that sort. I won't stand a lick of a poker for no one; he shan't come that over me"—and concurrently with this the shrill voice of Mr. Dingwell was yelling—

"Because I'm—because I'm—I'm—every d—d little whipper-snapper—because they think I'm down, the *wretches*, I'm to submit to their insults."

"I *don't* want to hurt him, Mr. Larkin; if I did, I'd give'm his tea in a mug this minute; but I don't, I say—only he shan't lift a poker to *me*."

"No one, my dear sir, has touched a poker; no one, Mr. Levi, ever dreamed of such a thing. Pray, my dear sir, my dear Mr. Dingwell, don't misconceive; we use slang phrases, now and then, without the least meaning or disrespect: it has become quite the tong. I assure you—it was only last week, at Nyworth Castle, where I had the honor to be received, Lady Mary Wrangham used the phrase *yarn*, for a long story."

"D—n you, can't you answer my question?" said Mr. Dingwell, more in his accustomed vein.

"Certainly, sir, we'll apply to it. Do, Mr. Levi, *do* leave the room; your presence at this moment only leads to excitement."

Levi, for a moment, pondered fiercely, and then nodded a sulky acquiescence.

"I shall overtake you in the court, Mr. Levi, if you can wait two or three minutes there."

The Jew nodded over his shoulder, and was gone.

"Mr. Dingwell, sir, I can't, I assure you. It's not in my power; it is in the hands of quite other people, on whom, ultimately, of course, these expenses will fall, to sanction the outlay by way of weekly allowance, which you suggest. But I will apply in the proper quarter, without delay. I wish, Mr. Dingwell, I *were* the party; you and I would not, I venture to think, be long in settling it between us."

"No, to be sure, you're all such liberal fellows—it's always some one else that puts us under the screw," laughed Mr. Dingwell, discordantly, with his face still flushed, and his hand trembling visibly; "you never have the stock yourselves—not you, there's always, Mr. Sheridan tells us, you know, in that capital play of his, a d—d unconscionable fellow in the background, and in Shakspeare's play, *Shylock*, you know, he hasn't the money himself, but *Tubal*, a wealthy Hebrew of his tribe, will furnish him. Hey! I suppose they gave the immortal Shakspeare a squeeze in his day; he understood 'em. But Shylock and Tubal are both dead and rotten long ago. It's a comfort you can't escape death, with all your cunning, d—n you."

But Mr. Larkin spoke peaceably to Mr. Dingwell. The expense, up to a certain time, would, of course, fall upon Mr. Kiffyn Verney; after that, however, Mr. Larkin and the Jew firm would feel it. But be it as it might, they could not afford to quarrel with Mr. Dingwell; and Mr. Dingwell was a man of a flighty and furious temper.

CHAPTER XXXV.

CLEVE VERNEY SEES THE CHATEAU DE CRESSERON.

I FANCY that these estimates, on a rather large scale, moved by Mr. Dingwell, were agreed to, for sufficient reasons, by the parties interested in disputing them.

Mr. Dingwell kept very close during the daytime. He used to wander listlessly to and fro, between his bedroom and his drawing-room, with his hands in the pockets of his dressing-gown, and his feet in a pair of hard leather slippers, with curled-up toes and no heels, that clattered on the boards like sabots.

Miss Sarah Rumble fancied that her lodger was a little shy of the windows; when he looked out into the court, he stood back a yard or more from the window-sill.

Mr. Larkin, indeed, made no secret of Mr. Dingwell's uncomfortable position, in his conferences with the Hon. Kiffyn Fulke Verney. Mr. Dingwell had been a bankrupt, against whom many transactions, to which the court had applied forcible epithets, had been proved; to whom, in fact, that tribunal had refused quarter; and who had escaped from its fangs by a miracle. There were judgments, however, in force against him; there was a warrant procurable any day for his arrest; he was still "in contempt;" I believe he was an "outlaw;" and, in fact, there was all but a price set on his head. Thus, between him and his oldest acquaintance, the late Hon. Arthur Verney, had subsisted some strong points of sympathy, which had no doubt helped to draw them into that near intimacy which stood the Hon. Kiffyn, no less than Mr. Dingwell (to whose mill it was bringing very comfortable grist), so well in stead at this moment.

It behooved Mr. Dingwell, therefore, to exercise caution. Many years had passed since he figured as a London trader. But time, the obliterator, in some cases works slowly; or rather, while the pleasant things of memory are sketched in with a pencil, the others are written in a bold, legible, round hand, as it were, with a broad-nibbed steel pen, and the best durable japanned ink; on which Father Time works his india rubber in vain, till his gouty old finger ache, and you can fancy him whistling curses through his gums, and knocking his bald pate with his knuckles. Mr. Dingwell, on the way home, was, to his horror, half recognized by an ancient cockney at Malta. Time, therefore, was not to be relied upon, though thirty years had passed; and Mr. Dingwell began to fear that a debtor is never forgotten, and that the man who is thoroughly dipped, like the lovely woman who stoops to folly, has but one way to escape consequences, and that is to die—a step which Mr. Dingwell did not care to take.

The meeting on the 15th, at the Hon. Kiffyn Fulke Verney's house, Mr. Dingwell was prevented by a cold from attending. But the note of his evidence sufficed, and the consultation, at which Mr. Larkin assisted, was quite satisfactory. The eminent Parliamentary counsel, who attended, and who made, that session, nearly fifty thousand pounds, went to the heart of the matter direct; was reverentially listened to by his junior, by the Parliamentary agent, by

the serious Mr. Larkin, at whom he thrust sharp questions, in a peremptory and even fierce way, like a general in action, to whom minutes are every thing; treated them once or twice to a recollection or short anecdote, which tended to show what a clever, sharp fellow the great Parliamentary counsel was, which, indeed, was true; and talked to no one quite from a level, except to the Hon. Kiffyn Fulke Verney, to whom he spoke confidentially in his ear, and who himself quickly grew into the same confidential relations.

"I'm glad you take my view—Mr.—Mr. Forsythe—very happy, about it, that we should be in accord. I've learned some confidence in my opinion, having found it more than once, I may say, come out right; and it gives me farther confidence that you take my view," said the Honorable Kiffyn Fulke Verney, grandly.

That eminent Parliamentary counsel, Forsythe, was on his way to the door, when Mr. Verney interposed with his condescension.

"Oh! Ha! Do I? Very happy. What is it?" said Forsythe, smiling briskly, glancing at his watch and edging toward the door, all together.

"I mean the confident view—the cheerful—about it," said the Hon. Mr. Verney, a little flushed, and laying his thin hand on his counsel's arm.

"Certainly — confident, of course, smooth sailing, *quite*. I see no hitch at *present*."

Mr. Forsythe was now, more decidedly, going. But he could not treat the Hon. Kiffyn Verney quite like an ordinary client, for he was before him occasionally in Committees of the House of Commons, and was likely soon to be so in others of the Lords, and, therefore, chafing and smiling, he hesitated under the light pressure of the old gentleman's stiff fingers.

"And you know the, I may say, *absurd* state of the law, about it—there was, you know, my unfortunate brother, Arthur—you are aware—*civiliter mortuus*, stopping the way, you know, for nearly twenty years, about it, ever since my poor father, Lord Verney, you know, expired, about it, and I've been, as you know, in the most painful position—*absurd*, you know."

"*Quite* so; I'm *afraid*—" Forsythe was again edging toward the door.

"And I always contended that where the heir was civilly dead, about it, the law should make proper provision—don't you see?"

"Quite so, only *fair*—a very wise and politic statute—and I wish very much, with your experience, you'd turn your attention to draw one. I'm obliged to be off now, to meet the New Discount directors; consultation at my chambers."

And so, smiling, Forsythe, Q.C., did vanish, at last.

All this over, Mr. Cleve Verney proposed to himself a little excursion, of a day or two, to Paris, to which his uncle saw no objection.

Not very far from the ancient town of Caen, where the comparative quietude of Normandy, throughout the throes of the great revolution, has spared so many relics of the by-gone France, is an old chateau, still habitable—still, after a fashion, comfortable—and which you may have at a very moderate rent indeed.

Here is an old wood, cut in a quincunx; old ponds stocked with carp; great old stables gone to decay; and the chateau itself is indescribably picturesque and sad.

It is the Chateau de Cresseron—withdrawn in historic seclusion, amid the glories and regrets of memory, quite out of the tide of modern traffic.

Here, by the side of one of the ponds, one evening, stood an old lady, throwing in little bits of bread to the carp that floated and flitted, like golden shadows, this way and that, as the crumbs sank in the water, when she heard a well-known voice near her, which made her start.

"Good heavens! Mr. Verney! *You* here?" she exclaimed, with such utter wonderment, her little bit of bread raised in her fingers, that Cleve Verney, though in no merry mood, could not help smiling.

"Yes—here indeed—and after all, is it quite so wonderful?" said he.

"Well, of course you know, Mr. Verney, I'm very glad to see you. Of course, you know *that*; but I'm very far from being certain that you have done a wise or a prudent thing in coming here, and I don't know that under the circumstances, I *ought* to be glad to see you; in fact I'm afraid it is *very rash*," said Miss Sheckleton, growing more decided as she proceeded.

"No, not rash. I've been very miserable, *so* miserable that the worst certainty which this visit might bring me, would be almost a relief compared with the intolerable suspense I have lived in; therefore, you see, it really is not rash."

"I'm very bad at an argument," persisted the old lady; "but it *is* rash, and *very* rash—you can't conceive," and here she lowered her voice, "the state of exasperation in which he is."

"He," of course, could only mean Sir Booth Fanshawe; and Cleve answered—

"I assure you, I can't blame him. I don't wonder. I think a great deal has been very wantonly done to aggravate his misfortunes; but surely, he can't fancy that I could sympathize with any such proceedings, or feel any thing but horror and disgust. Surely *you* would not allow him to connect me, however slightly? I *know* you would not."

"My dear Mr. Verney, you don't know Booth Fanshawe, or rather you do, I believe, know him a great deal too well, to fancy that I could venture to speak to him upon the subject. *That*, I assure you, is quite out of the question; and I may as well tell you frankly, if he were at home, I mean *here*, I should have begged you at once, inhospitable as it might seem, to leave this place, and trust to time and to letters, but *here* I would *not* have allowed you to linger."

"He's away from home, then!" exclaimed Cleve.

"Yes; but he'll be back to-night, at ten o'clock."

"At ten o'clock," repeated Cleve, and the young man thought what a treasure of minutes there was in the interval. "And Miss Fanshawe—Margaret—she's quite well?"

"Yes, she's quite well," answered kind Miss Sheckleton, looking in his earnest eyes, and thinking that he looked a little thin and pale. "She's quite well, and, I hope, you have been."

"Oh, yes," answered the young man, "as well as a man with a good many troubles can be. In fact, I may tell *you*, I've been very unhappy. I was thinking of writing to Sir Booth."

"*Don't*," implored Miss Sheckleton, looking quite wildly into his eyes, and with her hand upon his arm, as if to arrest the writing of that letter, "you have no notion how he feels. I assure you, an allusion—the slightest thing is quite enough to set him in a blaze. The other day, for instance, I did not know what it was, till I took up the paper he had been reading, and I found there something about the Verney peerage, and proof that Arthur Verney was dead, and your uncle to get it; and really I can't wonder—some people seem so unaccountably fortunate, and others, every thing goes wrong with—even *I* felt vexed when I read it, though of course, any good fortune happening to *you*, I should be very glad of. But he did not see any of us till next day—even Macklin."

"Yes, it is very true," said Cleve, "my uncle *is* dead, and we shall prove it, that is, my uncle Kiffyn will. But you are quite right to distinguish as you do. It involves nothing for me. Since it has come so near, I have lost all faith in its ever reaching me. I have, I can't call it a conviction, but a *superstition*, that it never will. I must build my own fortunes from their foundations, with my own hand. There is but one success on earth that can make me very proud and very happy. Do you think, that having come all this way, in that hope, on that one chance, that Margaret will see me?"

"I wish you had written to me before coming," said Anne Sheckleton, after a little pause. "I should have liked to find out first, all I could, from herself, she *is* so odd. I've often told you that she *is* odd. I think it would have been wiser to write to me before coming over, and I should have talked to her, that is, of course, if she had allowed me, for I can't in the least say, that she would even hear me on the subject."

"Well," said Cleve, with a sigh, "I have come—I am here—and go I can not without seeing her—I can not—and you, I think, are too kind to wish that I should. Yes, Miss Sheckleton, you have been my true friend throughout this—what shall I call it?—wild and terrible dream—for I can not believe it real—I wonder at it myself—I ought to wish I had never seen her—but I can not—and I think on the result of this visit depends the whole course of my life. You'll not see me long, I think, in the House of Commons, nor in England; but I'll tell you more by and by.

It was sunset now. A red and melancholy glow, rising from piles of western cloud, merged gradually eastward into the deep blue of night, in which the stars were already glimmering.

Along one of the broad avenues cut through the forest that debouches upon the court-yard of the quaint old chateau they were now walking, and raising his eyes, he saw Margaret approaching from the antique house.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SHE COMES AND SPEAKS.

"She is coming, Mr. Verney," said Miss Sheckleton, speaking low and quietly; but her voice sounded a little strangely, and I think the good-natured spinster was agitated.

Cleve, walking by her side, made no answer. He saw Margaret approach, and while she was yet a good way off, suddenly stop. She had not seen them before. There seemed no indecision. It was simply that she was startled and stood still.

"Pray, Miss Sheckleton, do you go on alone. *Entreat* her not to refuse me a few minutes," said he.

"I will—she shall—I will, indeed, Mr. Verney," said Miss Sheckleton, very much fidgeted. "But you had better remain where you were just now; I will return to you, and—there are some French servants at the house—will you think me very strange—unkind, I am sure, you will *not*—if I say it is only common prudence that you should not be seen at the house? You understand why I say so."

"Certainly. I shall do whatever you think best," he answered. They had arrested their walk, as Margaret had done, during this little parley. Perhaps she was uncertain whether her approach had been observed. The sun had gone down by this time, and the twilight had begun to make distant objects a little indistinct.

But there was no time for manœuvring here, for Miss Fanshawe resumed her walk, and her cousin, Anne Sheckleton, advanced alone to meet her.

"Margaret, dear, a friend has unexpectedly arrived," began Miss Sheckleton.

"And gone, perhaps," answered Margaret Fanshawe, in one of her moods. "*Better* gone—come, darling, let us turn, and go toward home—it is growing so dark."

And with these words, taking Miss Sheckleton's hand in hers, she turned toward the house, not choosing to see the friend whom that elderly lady had so eagerly indicated.

Strangely did Cleve Verney feel. That beautiful, cruel girl!—what could she *mean*?—how could she treat him so? Is there not, in strange countries, where people meet, a kindlier impulse than elsewhere?—and here—could any

thing be more stony and utterly cruel? The same wonderful *Cenci*—the same low, sweet voice—the same laugh, even—just for a moment—but now—how unspeakably cruel! He could see that Miss Sheckleton was talking earnestly to her as they walked slowly away. It all seemed like a dream. The formal old wood—the gray chateau in the background, rising, with its round turrets, and conical tops, and steep roofs against the rose-tinted sky of evening; and in the foreground—not two-score steps away—those figures—that girl to whom so lately he was so near being all the world—to whom, it now appeared, he was absolutly nothing—oh! that he had never heard, in Shakespeare's phrase, that mermaid voice!

His pride was wounded. With a yearning that amounted to agony, he watched their receding steps. Follow them he would not. He leaned against the tree by which Miss Sheckleton had left him, and half resolved to quit that melancholy scene of his worst disaster without another look or word—with only the regrets of all a life.

When Miss Sheckleton had reached Margaret, before the young lady spoke, she saw, by her unusual paleness and by something at once of pain and anger in her face, that she had seen Cleve Verney.

"Well, Margaret, if you *will* go, you *will*; but, before you make it irreparable, you must, at least, think."

"Think of what?" said Margaret, a little disdainfully.

"Think that he has come all this way for nothing but a chance of seeing you; of perhaps saying a few words to set himself right.

"If he wished to speak to me, he might have said so," she answered. "Not that I see any reason to change my mind on that point, or any good that can come, possibly, or forever, if he could talk and I listen for so long."

"Well, but you can't doubt what he has come for," said Miss Sheckleton.

"I don't doubt, because I don't mean to think about it," said the young lady, looking fiercely up toward the gilded weather-vanes that swung gently on the grey pinnacles of the chateau.

"Yes, but it *is* not a matter of doubt, or of thinking, but of fact, for he *did* say so," pleaded Miss Sheckleton.

"I wish we were in Italy, or some out of the way part of Spain," said the handsome girl, in the same vein, and walking still onward; "I always said this was too near England, too much in the current."

"No, dear, it is a quiet place," said good Anne Sheckleton.

"No, cousin Anne, it is the most *un*quiet place in all the world," answered the girl, in a wild, low tone, as she walked on.

"And he wants to speak to you; he entreats a few words, a very few."

"You *know* I ought not," said she.

"I know you *ought*, my dear; you'll be sorry for it, all your days, Margaret, if you don't," replied Anne Sheckleton.

"Come home, dear, come home, darling," said the girl, peremptorily, but sadly.

"I say, Margaret, if you let him go without speaking to him, you will regret it all your days."

"You have no right to talk this way, cousin Anne; I am unhappy enough as it is; come on," said she.

"If you send him away, as I say, it is all over between you."

"So it is, it *is* all over; let the dead rest."

"The world is wide enough; there are many beautiful creatures there, and he is himself so beautiful, and so clever; be very sure you care nothing for him, before you send him away, for you will never see him again," said Miss Anne Sheckleton.

"I know—I am sure—I have thought of every thing. I have made up my account long ago, for now, and for all my days," said she.

"So you *have*," answered Miss Sheckleton. "But while you have a moment still allowed you, Margaret, review it, I entreat of you."

"Come, darling, come—come—you ought not to have spoken to me; why have you said all this?" said Margaret sadly, and hurriedly.

"Now, Margaret darling, you are going to stay for a moment, and I will call him."

"*No!*" said the girl passionately, "my mind's made up; not in haste, cousin Anne, but long ago. I've looked my last on him."

"Now, darling, listen: you know, *I've* seen him, he's looking ill, I think; and I've told him that you *must* speak to him, Margaret; and I tell *you* you must," said Miss Sheckleton, blushing in her eagerness.

"No, cousin Anne, let there be an end of this between us; I thought it was over long ago. To him, I will never, never—while life remains—never speak more."

As she thus spoke, walking more hurriedly toward the house, she heard a voice beside her say—

"Margaret! Margaret, darling—one word!"

And turning suddenly, she saw Cleve Verney before her. Under the thick folds of her chestnut hair, her features were pale as marble, and for a time, it seemed to him he saw nothing but her wild, beautiful eyes fixed upon him.

Still as a statue, she stood confronting him. One little foot advanced, and her tiny hand closed, and pressed to her heart in the attitude in which an affrighted nun might hold her crucifix.

"Yes, Margaret," he said at last, "I was as near going—as you were of leaving me—unheard; but, thank God, *that* is not to be. No, Margaret darling, you *could* not. Wild as my words may sound in your ears, you will listen to them, for they shall be few; you will listen to them, for you are too good to condemn any one that ever loved you unheard."

There was a little pause, during which all that passed was a silent pressure of Miss Sheckle-

ton's hand upon Margaret's, as very pale, and with her brow knit in a painful anxiety, she drew hurriedly back, and left the two young people together, standing by the roots of the old tree, under the faint, rose-tinted sky of evening.

Lovers' promises or lovers' cruelties—which oaths are most enduring? Where now were Margaret's vows? Oh! inexhaustible fountain of pity, and beautiful mutability of woman's heart! In the passion avowed, so often something of simulation; in the feeling disowned, so often the true and beautiful life. Who shall read this wonderful riddle, running in romance, and in song, and in war, the world's history through?

"Margaret, will you hear me?" he pleaded.

To her it was like a voice in a dream, and a form seen there, in that dream-land in which we meet the dead, without wonder, forgetting time and separation.

"I don't know that I ought to change my purpose. I don't know why I do; but we shall never meet again, I am sure, so speak on."

"Yes, Margaret, I will speak on, and tell you how entirely you have mistaken and wronged me," said Cleve Verney, in the same sad and passionate tones.

Good-natured Anne Sheckleton, watching at a little distance, saw the talk—at first belonging altogether to Mr. Verney, at last begin to divide itself a little; then side by side they walked a few steps, and then paused again: and so once more a short way, the lady looking down, and then on and on to the margin of that long straight pond, on which in their season are floating water-lilies, and under its great oblong mirror, gliding those golden fishes which are, as we have seen, one of our spinster friend's kindly resources in this quaint exile. And so the twilight deepened; and Miss Sheckleton saw these two figures like shadows gliding side by side, to and fro, along the margin, till the moonlight came and lighted the still pool over, and dappled the sward with the shadows of the trees, and made the old chateau in the background, with its white front, its turrets and pinnacles and gilded vanes, look filmy as a fairy castle.

Wrapping her cloak about her, she sat herself down upon the marble seat close by, unobserved and pleased, watching this picture of Lorenzo and Jessica, and of all such moonlighted colloquies, with a wonderful and excited interest—with, indeed, a mixture of melancholy and delight and fear.

Half hour after half hour glided by, as she looked on this picture, and read in fancy the romance that was weaving itself out of the silvery thread of their sweet discourse in this sad old scene. And then she looked at her watch, and wondered how the time had sped, and sighed; and smiling and asking no question, came before them, and in a low, gentle warning, told them that the hour for parting had come.

As they stood side by side in the moonlight, did the beautiful girl, with the flush of that romantic hour, never, never to be forgotten, on her cheek, with its light in her wonderful eyes, ever look so beautiful before? Or did that young man, Cleve Verney, whom she thought she understood, but did not, ever look so handsome?—the enthusiasm and the glow of his victory in his strangely beautiful face.

There were a few silent moments: and she thought could fancy paint a more beautiful young couple than these!

There are scenes—only momentary—so near Paradise—sights, so nearly angelic, that they touch us with a mysterious ecstasy and sorrow. In the glory and translation of the moment, the feeling of its transitariness, and the sense of our mortal lot, cross and thrill us with a strange pain, like the mysterious angelic that mingles in the rapture of sublime music. So Miss Sheckleton, very pale, smiling very tenderly, sobbed and wept, one would have said bitterly, for a little while; and, drying her eyes quickly, saw before her the same beautiful young faces looking upon hers; and the old lady took their hands and pressed them, and smiled a great deal through her tears, and said—"All, at last, as I wished it: God bless you both—God Almighty bless you, my darling:" and she put her arms about Margaret's neck, and kissed her very tenderly.

And then came the reminder, that must not be slighted. The hour had come, indeed, and Cleve must positively go. Miss Sheckleton would hear of no farther delay—no, not another minute. Her fear of Sir Booth was profound; so with a "God bless you, darling," and a very pale face, and—why should there not be—one long, long kiss, Cleve Verney took his leave, and was gone; and the sailing moon hid herself among clouds, so darkness stole swiftly over the landscape.

Margaret Fanshawe drew her dear old cousin near to her, and in turn, placing her arms round her neck, folded her close, and Anne Sheckleton could feel the wild throbbing of the young girl's heart close to her own.

Margaret was not weeping, but she stood very pale, with her arms still laid on her cousin's shoulders, and looked almost wildly down into her wistful eyes.

"Cousin Anne—oh, darling! you must pray for me," said Margaret Fanshawe. "I thought it could never be; I thought I knew myself but all *that* is vain; there is another will above us—Fate—Eternal Fate, and I am where I am, I know not how."

"Why, Margaret, darling, it is what I have been longing for—the very best thing that could have happened; you ought to be the happiest girl in the world," urged Miss Anne Sheckleton cheerily.

"No, darling; I am not happy, except in this, that I know I love him, and would not give him up for all the world; but it seems to me to have been, from first to last, a fatality, and I can't shake off the fear that lies at my heart."

"Hush, dear—I hear wheels, I think," said Miss Sheckleton, listening.

Margaret was preoccupied, and did not listen. don't think she cared much at that moment who came or went, except that one to whom ier love was now irrevocably given.

"No; I can't hear—no; but he will be here mmediately. We must not be out, you know; e may ask for me, and he is so—so very—what hall I say?"

Margaret did not mind. She turned a wild nd plaintive look upward toward the strugling moon—now emerging, now lost again—nd she said—

"Come, darling—let us go," said Margaret.

And she looked round her gently, as if awakng from a dream.

"Come darling," she continued, placing her and on Anne Sheckleton's arm.

"Yes; and you are not to tease yourself, Iargaret, dear, with fancies and follies. As I aid before, you ought to be one of the happiest irls in existence."

"So I am—in a sense—in a degree," she nswered, dreamily—"very happy—oh! wonerfully happy—but there is—and I can't help t—the feeling of something overhanging me. don't know what—*fatal*, as I said; but, be it hat it may, let it come. I could not lose him ow, for all the world."

She was looking up, as she spoke, toward the roken moonlight, herself as pale, and a strange laintive smile of rapture broke over her beautiil face, as if answering the smile of a spirit in ie air.

"Come, darling, come," whispered Miss heckleton, and they walked side by side in ilence to the house, and so to Margaret's room, here she sat down by the window, loooking out, nd kind Anne Sheckleton sat by the table, with er thin old hand to her cheek, watching her ondly, and awaiting an opportunity to speak, or she was longing to hear a great deal more.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

CLEVE VERNEY HAS A VISITOR.

So Cleve Verney returned to England, and his iends thought his trip to Paris, short as it was, ad done him a world of good. What an lterative and tonic a little change of air somemes is!

The Honorable Kiffyn Fulke Verney was, in is high, thin-minded way, at last tolerably conent, and more pompous and respected than ever. he proof of his succession to the peerage of erney was in a perfectly satisfactory state. He ould prove it and take his seat next Session. Ie would add another to the long list of Lords iscounts Verney of Malory to be found in the old and scarlet chronicle of such dignities. He ad arranged with the trustees for a provisional ossession of Verney House, the great stone manion which blocks one side of the small parallelgram called Verney Square. Already contractors iad visited it and explored its noble chambers and long corridors, with foot-rule and note-book, getting together material for tenders, and Cleve had already a room there when he came up to town. Some furniture had got in, and some servants were established there also, and so the stream of life had begun to transfuse itself from the old town residence of the Hon. Kiffyn Fulke Verney into these long-forsaken channels.

Here, one morning, called a gentleman named Dingwell, whom Cleve Verney, happening to be in town, desired the servant to show into the room where he sat, with his breakfast, and his newspapers about him.

The tall old man entered, with a slight stoop, leering, Cleve thought, a little sarcastically over his shoulder as he did so.

Mr. Dingwell underwent Mr. Cleve Verney's reception, smiling oddly, under his white eyebrows, after his wont.

"I suspect some little mistake, isn't there?" said he, in his cold, harsh, quiet tones. "You can hardly be the brother of my old friend Arthur Verney. I had hoped to see Mr. Kiffyn Fulke Verney—I—eh?"

"I'm his nephew."

"Oh! *nephew?* Yes—another generation—yes, of course. I called to see the Honorable Kiffyn Fulke Verney. I was not able to attend the consultation, or whatever you call it. You know I'm your principal witness, eh? Dingwell's my name."

"Oh, to be sure—I beg pardon, Mr. Dingwell," said Cleve, who, by one of those odd slips of memory, which sometimes occur, had failed to connect the name with the case, on its turning up thus unexpectedly.

"I hope your admirable uncle, Kiffyn Verney, is, at all events, *alive* and *approachable*," said the old man, glancing grimly about the room; "though perhaps *you're* his next heir, and the hope is hardly polite?"

This impertinence of Mr. Dingwell's Mr. Cleve Verney, who knew his importance, and had heard something of his odd temper, resented only by asking him to be seated.

"*That*," said the old man, with a vicious laugh and a flush, also angry, "is a liberty which I was about to take uninvited, by right of my years and fatigue, eh?"

And he sat down with the air of a man who is rather nettled than pleased by an attention.

"And what about Mr. Kiffyn Verney?" he asked, sharply.

"My uncle is in the country," answered Cleve, who would have liked to answer the fool according to his folly, but he succumbed to the necessity, inculcated with much shrewdness, garnished with some references to Scripture, by Mr. Jos. Larkin, of indulging the eccentricities of Mr. Dingwell's temper a little.

"Then he *is* alive? I've heard such an account of the Verneys, their lives are so brittle, and snap so suddenly; my poor friend Arthur told me, and that Jew fellow Levi here, who seems so intimate with the family—d—n him! says the same: no London house likes to insure

them. Well, I see you don't like it: no one does; the smell of the coffin, sir; time enough when we are carrion, and fill it. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, sir, *quite*," said Cleve, dryly.

"No young man likes the sight of that stinking old lantern-jawed fellow, who shall be nameless, looking over his spade so slyly; but the best way is to do as I've done. Since you must meet him *one* day, go up to him, and make his acquaintance, and shake hands; and egad! when you've grown a little bit intimate, he's not half so disgusting, and sometimes he's even a little bit funny."

"If I were thinking of the profession of a sexton, or an undertaker, I might," began Cleve, who felt a profound disgust of this old Mr. Dingwell, "but as I don't, and since by the time it comes to my turn I shall be pretty well past seeing and smelling—"

"Don't be too sure of that," said Mr. Dingwell, with one of his ugly smirks. "But it isn't about such matters that I want to trouble you; in fact, I came to say a word to your uncle; but as I can't see him, you can tell him, and urge it more eloquently too, than I can. You and he are both orators by profession; and tell him he must give me five hundred pounds immediately.

"Five hundred pounds! *Why?*" said Cleve, with a scornful surprise.

"Because I want it," answered the old gentleman, squaring himself, and with the corner of his mouth drawn oddly in, his white head a little on one side, and his eyebrows raised, with altogether an air of vicious defiance,

"You have had your allowance raised very much, sir—it is an exorbitant allowance—what reason can you now urge for this, I must say, extraordinary request?" answered Cleve.

"The *same* reason, sir, precisely. If I don't get it I shall go away, *re infecta*, and leave you to find out proof of the death how you may."

Cleve was very near giving this vile old extortioner a bit of his mind, and ordering him out of the house, on the instant. But Mr. Larkin had been so very urgent on the point, that he commanded himself.

"I hardly think, sir, you can be serious," said Cleve.

"Egad, sir, you'll find it a serious matter if you don't; for, upon my soul, unless I'm paid, and *well* paid for it, I'll depose to nothing."

"That's plain speaking at all events," said Mr. Cleve Verney.

"Oh! sir, I'll speak more plainly still," said Mr. Dingwell, with a short sarcastic bow. "I never mince matters; life is too short for circumlocutions.

"*Verney* life, at all events, by your account, sir, and I don't desire them. I shall mention the matter to my uncle to-day in my letter, but I really can't undertake to do more, for I may tell you frankly, Mr. Dingwell, I can't for the life of me understand what you can possibly want of such a sum."

"I suppose, young gentleman, you have your pleasures, and I have mine, and they're not to be had without money; and egad, sir, if you fancy it's for love of your old uncle or of you that I am here, and taking all this trouble, you are very much mistaken; and if I help you to this house, and the title, and estates, I'll take leave to help myself to some little amusement—money I mean, also. Cool fellows, egad."

The brown features of the old man flushed again angrily as he laughed.

"Well, Mr. Dingwell, I can only repeat what I have said, and I will also speak to Mr. Larkin. I have no power in the business myself, and you had better talk to him," said Cleve.

"I prefer the fountain-head, sir. I don't care twopence how you arrange it among yourselves; but you must give me the money by Saturday."

"Rather an early day, Mr. Dingwell; however, as I said, the question is for my uncle; it can't affect me," said Cleve.

Mr. Dingwell mused angrily for a little, and Cleve thought his face one of the wickedest he had ever seen, while in this state of excited rumination.

"You all—*both* owe me more in that man's death—there are very odd circumstances about it, I can tell you—than, perhaps, you at present imagine," said Mr. Dingwell, looking up suddenly, with a dismal sneer, which subsided into an equally dismal stare.

Cleve for a second or two returned the stare, while the question crossed his mind—"Can the old villain mean that my miserable uncle met his death by foul means, in which he took a part, and intends to throw that consideration in with his averred services to enhance his claim?"

"You had better tell your uncle with my compliments," said Mr. Dingwell, "that he make a kettle of fish of the whole affair, in a way he doesn't expect, unless he makes matters square with me. I often think I'm a d—d idiot, sir, to let you off as I do."

"I don't see, Mr. Dingwell, that you are letting us off, as you say, so very easily," answered Cleve, with a cold smile.

"No, you *don't* see, but I'll *make* you see it," said Mr. Dingwell, very tartly, and with an unpleasant laugh. "Arthur Verney was always changing his quarters—was never in the light. He went by different nicknames. There were in all Constantinople but two men, except myself, the Consul, and the stock-broker, who cashed the money-orders for him, who could identify him, or who knew his name. He lived in the dark, and not very cleanly—you'll excuse the simile—like one of your sewer-rats. He died suddenly and oddly, sir, like a candle on which has fallen a drop of water, with a splutter and a flash, in a moment—one of your Verney deaths, sir. You might as well hope to prove the death of a particular town-dog there without kennel, or master, or name, a year after his brothers had eaten him. So, sir, I see my value."

"I don't recollect that my uncle ever disputed it," replied Mr. Cleve Verney.

"I understand your difficulty perfectly. The

presumption of English law, ha! ha! ha! is in favor of duration of human life, whenever you can't prove a death. So, English law, which we can't dispute—for it is the perfection of human wisdom—places the putrid body of my late friend Arthur in the robes, coronet, and staff of the Verneys, and would give him the spending of the rents, too, but that you can't make a horse drink, though you may bring him to the water. At all events, sir, my festering friend in the shroud will hold secure possession of the estates against all comers till he exhausts that patient presumption, and sees Kiffyn, and you, sir, and every Verney now alive, laid with their faces upward. So, sir, you see I know my value. I have the grand arcanum; I hold in my hand the Philosopher's Stone that can turn your pewter and brass into gold. I hold it fast, sir, and egad! I'll run away with it, unless I see a reason." And the old gentleman laughed, and shrugged and expanded his slender hands with a deprecation that was menacing.

Cleve was very angry, but he was also alarmed; for Mr. Dingwell looked quite capable of any treason against the Verney interest to which his avarice or his spites might prompt him. A wild, cold, wandering eye, a play of the nostrils, and a corrugation of the brows that gave to his smile, or his laugh, a menace that was villainous, and almost insane—warned the young man of the quality of the beast, and invited him to the exercise of all his self-control.

"I am quite certain, Mr. Dingwell, that my uncle will do whatever is reasonable and fair, and I am also sure that he feels his obligations to you. I shall take care that he hears all that you have said, and you understand that I literally have neither power nor influence in his decision."

"Well, he feels his obligations?" said Mr. Dingwell. "That is pleasant."

"Certainly; and, as I said, whatever is fair and reasonable I am certain he will do," said Cleve Verney.

"Fair and reasonable—that is exactly the thing—the *value;* and you know—

> 'The worth precise of any thing
> Is so much money as 'twill bring.'

And I'll make it bring what I say; and I make it a rule to treat money matters in the grossest terms, because that is the only language which is at once intelligible and direct—and grossness I believe to be the soul of business; and, so, sir, tell him with my compliments, I shall expect five hundred pounds at ten o'clock in the morning, in Bank of England notes."

At this moment the servant announced the Rev. Isaac Dixie, and Mr. Dingwell stood up, and, looking with a kind of amusement and scorn round the room upon the dusty portraits, made a sharp bow to Cleve Verney, and saying—

"That's all; good-morning, sir,"—with another nod, turned about, and walked jauntily out of the room.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE REV. ISAAC DIXIE SETS FORTH ON A MISSION.

There was a basis of truth in all that Mr. Dingwell had said, which made his voice more grating, his eyes more dangerous, and his language more disgusting.

Would that Fortune had sent them, Cleve thought, some enchanted horse, other than that beast, to fly them into the fairy-land of their long deferred ambition! Would that she had sent them a Rarey, to lead them by a metaphoric halter, and quell, by his art, the devil within him—the evil spirit before which something in Cleve's nature quailed, because it seemed to know nothing but appetite, and was destitute of human sympathy or moral foresight.

Dingwell was beset with dangers and devils of his own; but he stood in his magic circle, making mouths and shaking his fist, and grinning at them. He seemed to have no imagination to awe, or prudence to restrain him. He was aware, and so was Cleve, that Larkin knew all about his old bankruptcy, the judgments against him, the impounded forgeries on which he had been on the brink of indictment, and his escape from prison; and yet he railed at Larkin, and defied the powerful Verneys, as if he had been an angel sent to illuminate, to lecture, and to rule them.

Mr. Larkin was usually an adroit and effectual tamer of evil beasts, in such case as this Mr. Dingwell. He waved his thin wand of red-hot iron with a light and firm hand, and made every raw smoke in turn, till the lion was fit to lie down with the lamb. But this Dingwell was an eccentric brute; he had no awe for the superior nature, no respect for the imposing airs of the tamer—not the slightest appreciation even of his cautery. On the contrary, he seemed to like the sensation, and amuse himself with the exposure of his sores to the inspection of Mr. Larkin, who began to feel himself drawn into an embarrassing and highly disreputable confidence.

Mr. Larkin had latterly quite given up the idea of frightening Mr. Dingwell, for when he tried that method, Mr. Dingwell had grown uncomfortably lively and skittish, and, in fact, frightened the exemplary Mr. Larkin confoundedly. He had recapitulated his own enormities with an elation and frightful merriment worthy of a scandalous corner at a Walpurges ball; had demonstrated that he perfectly understood the game of the serious attoney, and showed himself so curiously thick of skin, and withal so *sportive* and formidable a rhinoceros, that Mr. Larkin then and there learned a lesson, and vowed no more to try the mesmerism that succeeded with others, or the hot rod of iron under which they winced and gasped and succumbed.

Such a systematic, and even dangerous defiance of every thing good, he had never encountered before. Such a person exactly as this Mr. Dingwell he could not have imagined. There was, he feared, a vein of insanity in that

unfortunate man which made him insensible to the extreme peril of his own position, and enabled him actually to frighten the cautious Mr. Larkin, who was always girded with three coats of mail, and seven walls of brass, and I know not how many talismans besides.

He had seen quite enough of the horrid adroitness of Mr. Dingwell's horse-play, and felt such qualms whenever that animal capered and snorted, that he contented himself with musing and wondering over his unintelligible idiosyncrasies, and adopted a studiously soothing treatment with him—talked to him in a friendly, and even tender way—and had some vague plans of getting him ultimately into a mad-house.

But Mr. Dingwell was by this time getting into his cab, with a drapery of mufflers round him, and telling the man through the front window to drive to Rosemary Court; he leaned back in a corner, and chuckled and snorted in a conceited ecstasy over his victory, and the money which was coming to minister to no good in this evil world.

Now Cleve Verney leaned back in his chair, and there rose before him a view of a moonlighted wood, and old chateau, with its many peaked turrets, and steep roofs, showing silvery against the deep, liquid sky of night, and with a sigh he saw on the white worn steps that beautiful, wonderful shape that was his hope and his fate; and as he leaned on his hand, the Reverend Isaac Dixie, whose name had strangely summoned this picture from the sea of his fancy, entered the room, smiling rosily, after his wont, and extending his broad hand, as he marched with deliberate strides across the floor, as much to say—"Here I am, your own old tutor and admirer, who always predicted great things for you; I know you are charmed, as I am; I know how you will greet me."

"Ha! old Dixie," and Cleve got up, with a kind of effort, and not advancing very far, shook hands.

"So you have got your leave—a week—or *how* long?"

"I have arranged for next Sunday, that's all, my dear Mr. Verney; some little inconvenience, but very happy—always happy."

"Come, I want to have a talk with you," said Cleve, drawing the clergyman to a chair. "Don't you remember, you ought, you know, what Lord Sparkish (isn't it?) says in Swift's Polite Conversations—'Tis as cheap sitting as standing.'"

The clergyman took the chair, simpering bashfully, for the allusion was cruel, and referred to a time when the Reverend Isaac Dixie, being as yet young in the ways of the world, and somewhat slow in apprehending literary ironies, had actually put his pupil through a grave course of "Polite Conversation," which he picked up among some old volumes of the works of the great Dean of St. Patrick's, on the school-room shelf at Malory.

"And for my accomplishment of saying smart things in a polite way, I am entirely obliged to you and Dean Swift," said Cleve mischievously.

"Ah! ha! you were always fond of a jest, my dear Mr. Verney; you liked poking fun, you did, at your old tutor; but you know how that really was—I have explained it so often; still, I do allow, the jest is not a bad one."

But Cleve's mind was already on quite another subject.

"And now, Dixie," said he, with a sharp glance into the clergyman's eyes, "you know, or at least you guess, what it is I want you to do for me?"

The clergyman looked down by his gaiters, with his head a little on one side, and his mouth a little pursed; and said he, after a momentary silence—

"I really, I may say *unaffectedly*, assure you that I do not."

"You're a queer fellow, old Dixie," said Cleve; "you won't be vexed, but you are always a little bit too clever; I did not tell you exactly, but I told you enough to enable you to guess it. Don't you remember our last talk: come now, Dixie, you're no muff."

"I hope not, my dear Cleve; I may be, but I don't pretend to that character, though I have still, I apprehend, much to learn in the world's ways."

"Yes, of course," said the young man; and tapped his small teeth, that glittered under his mustache, with the end of his pencil-case, while he lazily watched the face of the clergyman from under his long lashes.

"And I assure you," continued the clergyman, "if I were to pretend that I did apprehend your intentions, I should be guilty of an inaccuracy amounting, in fact, to an untruth."

He thought he detected something a little mocking in the handsome face of the young gentleman, and could not tell, in the shadow of the window-curtain, whether those even white teeth were not smiling at him outright; and a little nettled, but not forgetting himself, he went on—

"You know, my dear Cleve, it is nothing on earth to *me*—absolutely; I act merely to oblige—merely, I mean to be useful—if in my power, consistently with all other considerations and I speak, I humbly but confidently hope, habitually the truth—"

"Of *course* you do," said the young gentleman, with emphasis, and growing quite serious again. "It is very kind, I know, your coming all this way, and managing your week's absence; and you may for the present know just as little or as much of the matter as you please; only mind, this is—not of course in any wrong sense—a dark business—awfully quiet. They say that in England a talent for speaking may raise a man to any thing, but I think a talent for holding one's tongue is sometimes a better one. And—I am quite serious, old Dixie—*I'll not* forget your fidelity to me, upon my honor—really, never; and as you know, I may yet have the power of proving it."

The Rev. Isaac Dixie folded his hands, and hung his head sideways in a meek modesty, and withal smiled so rosily and gloriously, as he sat in front of the window, that had it happened an hour before sunrise, the sparrows in the ivy all along the stable walls would undoubtedly have mistaken it for the glow of Aurora, and commenced their chirping and twittering salutations to the dawn an hour too soon.

"It is very gratifying, *very*, you can not readily estimate, my dear, and—may I not say?—my *illustrious* pupil, *how* gratifying to me, quite irrespective of all those substantially kind intentions which you are pleased to avow in my behalf, to hear from your lips so frank and—may I say—almost affectionate a declaration; so just an estimate of my devotion to your interests, and I may say, I hope, of my character generally?"

The Rector of Clay was smiling with a huge bashfulness, and slowing folding and rubbing one hand over the other, with his head gently inclined, and his great blue chin upon his guileless, single-breasted, black silk bosom, as he spoke all this in mellow effusion.

"Now, Dixie," said the young man, while a very anxious expression for the first time showed itself in his face, "I want you to do me a kindness—a kindness that will tie me to you all the days of my life. It is something, but not much; chiefly that you will have to keep a secret, and take some little trouble, which I know you don't mind; but nothing serious, not the slightest irregularity, a trifle, I assure you, and chiefly, as I said, that you will have to keep a secret for me."

Dixie also looked a good deal graver as he bowed his acquiescence, trying to smile on, and still sliding his hands softly, one over the other.

"I know you guess what it is—no matter—we'll not discuss it, dear Dixie; it's quite past that now. You'll have to make a little trip for me—you'll not mind it; only across what you used to call the herring-pond; and you must wait at the Silver Lion at Caen; it is the best place there—I wish it was better—not a soul will see you—I mean English, no one but quiet French people; and there is quite amusement, for a day or so, in looking over the old town. Just wait there, and I'll let you know every thing before you have been two days there. I've got your passport; you shall have no trouble. And you need not go to a bank, there's French money here; and you'll keep it, and spend it for me till I see you; and you must go *to-day*."

"And, of course, I know it is nothing *wrong*, my dear Cleve; but we are told to avoid even the *appearance* of evil. And in any case, I should not, of course, for the world, offend your uncle—Lord Verney, I may call him now—the head of the family, and my very kind patron; for I trust I never forget a kindness; and if it should turn out to be any thing which by any chance he might misinterpret, I may reckon upon your religious silence, my dear Cleve, as respects my name?"

"Silence! of course—I'd die before I should tell, under any pressure. I think you know I can keep a secret, and my own especially. And never trust my honor more if your name is ever breathed in connection with any little service you may render me."

He pressed the Rev. Isaac Dixie's hand very earnestly as he spoke.

"And now, will you kindly take charge of this for me, and do as I said?" continued Cleve, placing the French money in Dixie's not unwilling hand. "And on this paper I have made a note of the best way—all about the boat and the rest; and God bless you, my dear Dixie, goodbye."

"And God bless *you*, my dear Cleve," reciprocated the clergyman, and they shook hands again, and the clergyman smiled blandly and tenderly; and as he closed the door, and crossed the hall, grew very thoughtful, and looked as if he were getting into a possible mess.

Cleve, too, was very pale as he stood by the window, looking into the sooty garden at the back of Verney House.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

OVER THE HERRING-POND.

Like the vision that had visited Cleve as he sat in the breakfast-room of Verney House, awaiting the Rev. Isaac Dixie, the old Chateau de Cresseron shared that night in the soft yet brilliant moonlight. That clergyman—vulgar, I am afraid; worldly, perhaps; certainly not beautiful—had undertaken this foreign mission into the land of romance; and among its shadows and enchanted lights, and heroic phantoms, looked, I am afraid, incongruous, as the long-eared, shaggy head of Bottom in the fairy-haunted wood near Athens.

In the ancient town of Caen, in the Silver Lion, the Rev. Isaac Dixie that evening made himself partially understood, and altogether comfortable. He had an excellent dinner, and partook, moderately of course, of the very best vintage in the crypt of that venerable inn. Why should he not? Was he not making harmless holiday, and guilty of no extravagance; for had not Mr. Cleve Verney buckled a long purse to his girdle, and told him to dip his fingers in it as often and as deep as he pleased? And if he undertook the task—trod out Cleve Verney's corn, surely it was no business of his to call for a muzzle, and deny himself his heart's content.

In that exquisite moonlight, having had his cup of coffee, the Rev. Isaac Dixie made a loitering promenade: every thing was bewitching—a little wonderful, he fancied—a little strange—from his shadow, that looked so sharp on the white road, to the gothic fronts and gables of old carved houses, emitting ruddy glimmerings from diamond casements high in air, and half melting

in the deep liquid sky, gleaming with stars over his head.

All was perfectly French in language and costume: not a note of the familiar English accent mingled in the foreign hum of life. He was quite at his ease. To all censorious eyes he walked invisible; and, shall I tell it? Why not? For in truth, if his bishop, who abhors that narcotic, and who, I am sure, never reads novels, and therefore can not read it here, learns nothing of it, the telling can hurt nobody. He smoked three great cheroots, mild and fragrant, that evening, in the ancient streets of Caen, and returned to his inn, odorous of that perfume.

It would have been altogether a delicious excursion, had there not been a suspense and an anxiety to trouble the divine. The Rev. Isaac Dixie regretted now that he had not asked Cleve to define his object. He suspected, but did not know its nature. He had no idea how obstinately and amazingly the problem would recur to his mind, and how serious would grow his qualms as the hour of revelation drew near.

The same moon is shining over the ancient streets of Caen, and over smoke-canopied Verney House, and over the quaint and lonely Chateau de Cresseron. In a tapestried room in this old French house candles were burning, the window open, and Margaret Fanshawe sitting at it, and looking out on the moonlit woods and waters, and breathing the still air, that was this night soft as summer, in the raptures of a strange dream: a dream—no more; the uncertainty is over, and all her griefs. No longer is she one of that forlorn race that hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. She is not born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward, but translated. Alas! the angelic voice has not yet proclaimed "that God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." These words are for the glorified, who have passed the gates of death.

In this bliss, as in all that pertains to love, reason has small share. The heart rejoices as the birds sing. A great suspense—the greatest care that visits the young heart—has ended in a blessed certainty, and in so far the state resembles heaven; but, as in all mortal happiness, there mingles in this also a sadness like distant music.

Old Sir Booth Fanshawe is away on one of his mysterious journeys, and can not return for three or four days, at soonest. I do not know whether things are beginning to look brighter with Sir Booth, or whether his affairs are being managed into *utter* ruin. Meanwhile, the evil spirit has departed from the house, and the spirit of music has come, music with yet a cadence of sadness in it

This fair, quaint landscape, and beautiful moonlight! Who ever looks on such a scene that does not feel a melancholy mingling in his delight?

"The moon shines bright:—In such a night as this,
When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees,
And they did make no noise; in such a night,
Troilus, methinks, mounted the Trojan walls,
And sighed his soul toward the Grecian tents,
Where Cressid lay that night. In such a night
Stood Dido, with a willow in her hand,
Upon the wild sea-banks, and waved her love
To come again to Carthage."

Thus, in the vision of the Seer who lies in Stratford-on-Avon, moonlight and love and melancholy are related; and so it is, and will be, to the end of time, till mortal love is no more, and sadness ends, and the moon is changed to blood, and all things are made new.

And now over the moonlit water, through the boughs of the old trees, the still night air is thrilled with a sweet contralto—a homely song—the echo of childish days and the nursery. Poor Milly! her maid, who died so early, whose lover was a young sailor, far away, used to sing it for her in the summer evenings, when they sat down under the hawthorns, on Winnockbough, looking toward the sea, though the sea was many a mile away:

"As Eve went forth from Paradise,
She, weeping, bore away
One flower, that, reared in tears and sighs,
Is growing to this day.

Where'er the children of the fall
Are toiling to this hour,
It blooms for each, it blooms for all,
And Love we call this flower.

Red roses of the by-gone year
Are mingled with the mould,
And other roses will appear
Where they grew pale and old.

But where it grew, no other grows,
No bloom restores the sear;
So this resembles not the rose,
And knows no other year.

So, welcome, when thy bloom is red,
The glory of thy light;
And welcome when thy bloom is shed,
The long sleep of my night."

And now the song is ended, and, listening, Nature seems to sigh; and looking toward the old chateau, the front next you is in shadow, the window is open, and within you see *two* ladies. The elder is standing by the girl, who sits still at the open window, looking up into the face of her old friend—the old friend who has known, in the early days of romance, what love is, for whom now the bloom is shed, and mingling with the mould, but who remembers sadly the blush and glory of its light that died five-and-thirty years ago upon Canadian snows.

Gently the old lady takes her hand, and sits beside her girlish kinswoman, and lays her other hand over that, and smiles with a strange look of affection, and admiration, and immeasurable compassion that somehow seems to translate her, it is so sad and angelic. I can not hear what she is saying, but the young lady looks up, and kisses her thin cheek, and lays her head upon her old shoulder.

Behind, high over the steep roofs and pinnacles, and those glimmering weather-vanes, that seem sometimes to melt quite away, hangs the moon, unclouded—meet emblem of a pure love—no longer crossed by the sorrows of true love's course—Dian the Chaste, with her sad, pure,

and beautifully misleading light—alas! the emblem, also, of mutation.

In a few concise and somewhat dry sentences, as old prison stones bear the records which thin hands, long since turned to dust, have carved, the world's corridors and corners bear the tracings of others that were busy two thousand years ago; and the inscriptions that tell the trite story of human fears and sadness, cut sharp and deep in the rock, tell simply and briefly how Death was the King of Terrors, and the shortness of Life the bitter wonder, and black Care the companion of the wayfarers who marched by the same route to the same goal, so long ago. These gigantic griefs and horrors are all in a nutshell. A few words tell them. Their terror is in their truth. There is no use in expanding them; they are sublimely simple. Among the shadowy men and women that people these pages, I see them everywhere—plots too big and complicated to be got, by any compression, within the few pages and narrow covers of the book of their lives—Care, in her old black weeds, and Death, with stealthy foot and blow like thunder.

Twelve months had come and gone forever since the Reverend Isaac Dixie made that little trip to Caen, every month bringing his portion of blossom, fruit, or blight to every mortal. All had gone well and gloriously in this Verney Peerage matter.

The death of the late Honorable Arthur Verney was proved; and the Honorable Kiffyn Fulke Verney, as next heir, having complied with the proper forms, duly succeeded to the ancient peerage of the Verneys. So the dream was accomplished more splendidly, perhaps, than if the prize had come ealier, for the estates were in such condition as they had never attained to since the great rebellion; and if Viscount Verney was not among the most potent of his peers, the fault was not in the peerage and its belongings.

I don't know that Lord Verney was on the whole a happier man than the Honorable Kiffyn had been. He had become somewhat more exacting; his pride pronounced itself more implacably; men felt it more, because he was really more formidable. Whatever the Viscount in the box might be, the drag he drove was heavy, and men more alert in getting out of his way than they would, perhaps, had he been a better whip.

He had at length his heart's desire; but still there was something wanting. He was not quite where he ought to be. With his boroughs, and his command of one county, and potent influence in another, he ought to have been decidedly a greater man. He could not complain of being slighted. The minister saw him when he chose; he was listened to, and in all respects courteously endured. But there was something unsatisfactory. He was not *telling*, as he had expected. Perhaps he had no very clear conceptions to impress. He had misgivings, too, that secretly depressed and irritated him. He saw Twyndle's eye wander wildly, and caught him yawning stealthily into his hand, while he was giving him his view of the affair of "the Matilda Briggs," and the right of search. He had seen Foljambe, of the Treasury, suddenly laugh at something he thought was particularly wise, while unfolding to that gentleman, in the drawing-room, after dinner, his ideas about local loans, in aid of agriculture. Foljambe did not laugh outright. It was only a tremulous qualm of a second, and he was solemn again, and rather abashed. Lord Verney paused, and looked for a second, with stern inquiry in his face, and then proceeded politely. But Lord Verney never thought or spoke well of Foljambe again, and often reviewed what he had said, in secret, to try to make out where the absurdity lay, and was shy of ventilating that particular plan again, and sometimes suspected that it was the boroughs and the county, and not Kiffyn Lord Verney, that were listened to.

As the organ of self-esteem is the region of our chief consolations and irritations (and its condition regulates temper), this undivulged mortification, you may be sure, did not make Lord Verney, into whose ruminations was ever trickling, through a secret duct, this fine stream of distilled gall, brighter in spirits, or happier in temper.

Oh! vanity of human wishes! Not that the things we wish for are not in themselves pleasant, but that we forget that, as in nature every substance has its peculiar animacule and infestings, so every blessing has, too minute to be seen at a distance, but quite inseparable, its parasite troubles.

Cleve Verney, too, who stood so near the throne, was he happy? The shadow of care was cast upon him. He had grown an anxious man. "Verney's looking awfully thin, don't you think, and seedy, and he's always writing long letters, and rather cross?" was the criticism of one of his club friends. "Been going a little too fast, I dare say."

Honest Tom Sedley thought it was this pending peerage business, and the suspense, and reported to his friend the confident talk of the town on the subject. But when the question was settled, with a brilliant facility, his good humor did not recover. There was still the same cloud over his friend, and Tom began to fear that Cleve had got into some very bad scrape, probably with the Hebrew community.

CHAPTER XL.

MR. CLEVE VERNEY PAYS A VISIT TO ROSEMARY COURT.

That evoked spirit, Dingwell, was now *functus officio*, and might be dismissed. He was as much afraid of the light of London—even the gas-light—as a man of his audacity could be of any thing. Still he lingered there.

Mr. Larkin had repeatedly congratulated the Verney peer, and his young friend and patron,

Cleve, upon his own masterly management, and the happy result of the case, as he called it. And although, with scriptural warning before him, he would be the last man in the world to say, "Is not this great Babylon that I have builded?" yet he did wish Lord Viscount Verney, and Cleve Verney, M. P., distinctly to understand that *he*, Mr. Larkin, had been the making of them. There were some things—very many things, in fact, all desirable—which those distinguished persons could effect for the good attorney of Gylingden, and that excellent person in consequence presented himself diligently at Verney House.

On the morning I now speak of, he was introduced to the library, where he found the peer and his nephew.

"I ventured, my lord, to call—how do you do Mr. Verney?—to invite your lordship's attention to the position of Mr. Dingwell, who is compelled by lack of funds to prolong his stay in London. He is, I may say, most anxious to take his departure, quietly and expeditiously, for Constantinople, where, I venture to think, it is expedient for all parties that his residence should be fixed, rather than in London, where he is in hourly danger of detection and arrest, the consequence of which, my lord—it will probably have struck your lordship's rapid comprehension already—would be, I venture to think, a very painful investigation of his past life, and a concomitant discrediting of his character, which although, as your lordship would point out to me, it can not disturb that which is already settled, would yet produce an unpleasant effect out-of-doors, which, it is to be feared, he would take care to aggravate by all means in his power, were he to refer his detention here, and consequent arrest, to any fancied economy on your lordship's part."

"I don't quite follow you about it, Mr. Larkin," said Lord Verney, who generally looked a little stern when he was puzzled. "I don't quite apprehend the drift—be good enough to sit down—about it—of your remarks, as they bear upon Mr. Dingwell's wishes, and my conduct. Do *you*, Cleve?"

"I conjecture that Dingwell wants more money, and can't be got out of London without it," said Cleve.

"Eh? Well that *did* occur to me—of *course*, that's plain enough—about it—and *what* a man that must be!—and—God bless me! about it—all the money he has got from me! It's incredible, Mr.—a—*Larkin*, three hundred pounds, you know, and he wanted *five*, and that absurdly enormous weekly payment besides!"

"Your lordship has exactly, as usual, touched the point, and anticipated, with your wonted accuracy, the line on the other side, and indeed I may also say, all that may be urged by way of argument, *pro* and *con*. It is a wonderful faculty!" added Mr. Larkin, looking down with a contemplative smile, and a little wondering shake of the head.

"Ha, ha! Something of the same sort has been remarked in our family about it," said the Viscount, much pleased. "It facilitates business—rather, I should hope—about it."

The attorney shook his head, reflectively, raising his hands, and said, "No one but a professional man can have an *idea!*"

"And what do you suggest?" asked Cleve, who was perhaps a little tired of the attorney's compliments.

"Yes, what do you suggest, Mr.—Mr. *Larkin?* Your suggestion I should be prepared to consider. Any thing, Mr. Larkin, suggested by you *shall* be considered," said Lord Verney, grandly, leaning back in his chair, and folding his hands.

"I am much—very much—flattered by your lordship's confidence. The former money, I have reason to think, my lord, went to satisfy an old debt, and I have reason to *know* that his den has been discovered by another creditor, from whom, even were funds at his disposal to leave England to-night, escape would be difficult, if not impossible."

"How much money does he want?" asked Mr. Cleve Verney.

"A *moment*, a *moment*, please. I was going to say," said Lord Verney, "if he wants money—about it—it would be desirable to *state* the amount."

Mr. Larkin, thus called on, cleared his voice, and his dove-like eyes contracted, and assumed their rat-like look, and he said, watching Lord Verney's face—

"I am afraid, my lord, that less than three hundred—"

Lord Verney contracted his brows, and nodded, after a moment.

"Three hundred pounds. Less, I say, my lord, will not satisfy the creditor, and there will remain something still in order to bring him back, and to keep him quiet there for a time; and I think, my lord, if you will go the length of *five* hundred—"

"'Gad, it's growing quite serious, Mr.—Mr. *Sir*, I confess I don't half understand this *person*, Mr. Dong-Ding—whatever it is—it's going rather too *fast* about it. I—I—and that's my clear opinion—" and Lord Verney gazed and blinked sternly at the attorney, and patted his fragrant pocket handkerchief several times to his mouth—"very unreasonable and monstrous, and considering all I've done, very *ungrateful*."

"Quite so, my lord; monstrously ungrateful. I can't describe to your lordship the trouble I have had with that extraordinary and, I fear I must add, fiendish person. I allude, of course, my lord, in my privileged character as having the honor of confidential relations with your lordship, to that unfortunate man, Dingwell. I assure you on one occasion he seized a poker in his lodgings, and threatened to dash my brains out."

"Very good, sir," said Lord Verney, whose mind was busy upon quite another point; "and suppose I *do*, what do we gain, I ask, by assisting him?"

"Simply, my lord, he is so incredibly reckless, and, as I have said, *fiendish*, that if he were disappointed, I do think he will stick at nothing, even to the length of swearing that his evidence for your lordship was *perjured*, for the purpose of being revenged, and your generosity to him pending the inquiry, or rather the preparation of proofs, would give a color unfortunately even to that monstrous allegation. Your lordship can have no idea—the elevation of our own mind prevents it—of the desperate character with whom we have had to deal."

"Upon my life, sir, a pleasant position you seem to have brought me into," said Lord Verney, flushing a good deal.

"My lord, it was inevitable," said Mr. Larkin, sadly.

"I don't think he could have helped it, really," said Cleve Verney.

"And who says he could?" asked Lord Verney, tartly. "I've all along said it could not well be helped, and that's the reason I *did* it, don't you see? but I may be allowed to say, I suppose, that the position is a most *untoward* one; and so it is, egad!" and Lord Verney got up in his fidget, and walked over to the window, and to the chimney-piece, and to the table, and fiddled with a great many things.

"I remember my late brother, Shadwell Verney—he's dead, poor Shadwell—had a world of trouble with a fellow—about it—who used to extort money from him—something, I suppose, like this Mr. Ringwood—or I mean—you know his name—till he called in the police, and put an end to it."

"Quite true, my lord, quite true: but don't you think, my lord, such a line with Mr. Dingwell might lead to a fracas, and the possible unpleasantness to which *I* venture to allude? *You* have seen him, Mr. Verney?"

"Yes; he's a beast, he really *is*; a little bit mad, I almost think."

"A little bit mad, precisely so; it really is, my lord, most melancholy. And I am so clearly of opinion that if we quarrel definitively with Mr. Dingwell, we may find ourselves in an extremely difficult position, that were the case my own, I should have no hesitation in satisfying Mr. Dingwell, even at a sacrifice, rather than incur the annoyance I anticipate. If you allow me, my lord, to conduct the matter with Mr. Dingwell, I think I shall succeed in getting him away quietly."

"It seems to me a very serious sum, Mr. Larkin," said Lord Verney.

"Precisely so, my lord; serious—very serious; but your lordship made a remark once in my hearing which impressed me powerfully; it was to the effect that where an object is to be accomplished, it is better to expend a little too much power, than any thing too little." I think that Mr. Larkin invented this remark of Lord Verney's, which, however, his lordship was pleased to recognize, notwithstanding.

So the attorney took his departure, to call again next day.

"Clever man that Mr.—Mr. Larkin—vastly clever," said Lord Verney. "I rather think there's a great deal in what he says—it's very disgusting—about it; but one must consider, you know—there's no harm in considering—and—and that Mr. Ding—Dong—Dingleton, isn't it?—about it—a most offensive person. I must consider. I shall think it over, and give him my ideas to-morrow."

Cleve did not like an expression which struck him in the attorney's face that day, and he proposed next day to write to Mr. Dingwell, and actually did so, requesting that he would be so good as to call at Verney House.

Mr. Dingwell did not come, but a note came by post, saying that the writer, Mr. Dingwell, was not well enough to venture a call.

What I term Mr. Larkin's rat-like eyes, and a certain dark and even wicked look that crosses the attorney's face, when they appear, had left a profound sense of uncertainty in Cleve's mind respecting that gentleman's character and plans. It was simply a conviction that the attorney meditated something odd about Mr. Dingwell, and that no good man could look as he had looked.

There was no use in opening his suspicion, grounded on so slight a thing as a look, to his uncle, who though often timid and hesitating, and in secret helpless, and at his wits' end for aid in arriving at a decision, was yet, in matters where a vanity was concerned, or a strong prejudice or caprice involved, often incredibly obstinate.

Mr. Larkin's look teased Cleve. Larkin might grow into an influence very important to that young gentleman, and was not lightly to be quarreled with. He would not quarrel with him; but he would see Dingwell, if indeed that person were still in London; a fact about which he had begun to have some odd misgivings. The note was written in a straight, cramp hand, and Mr. Larkin's face was in the background always. He knew Mr. Dingwell's address; an answer, real or forged, had reached him from it. So, full of dark dreams and conjectures, he got into a cab, and drove to the entrance of Rosemary Court, and knocked at Miss Sarah Rumble's door.

That good lady, from the shadow, looked suspiciously on him.

"Is Mr. Dingwell at home?"

"Mr. Dingwell, sir?" she repeated.

"Yes. Is he at home?"

"Mr. Dingwell, sir? *No*, sir."

"Does not Mr. Dingwell live here?"

"There *was* a gentleman, please, sir, with a name like that. Go *back*, child," she said sharply to Lucy Maria, who was peeping in the background, and who might not be edified, perhaps, by the dialogue. "Beg parding, sir," she continued, as the child disappeared; "they *are* so tiresome! There was an old gentleman lodging here, sir, please, which his name was like that, I do remember."

Cleve Verney did not know what to think.

"Is there any one in the house who knows Mr. Dingwell? I've come to be of use to him; perhaps he could see me. Will you say Mr. Verney?"

"Mr.—*what*, sir, please?"

"Verney—here's my card; perhaps it is better."

As the conversation continued, Miss Rumble had gradually come more and more forward, closing the door more and more as she did so, so that she now confronted Cleve upon the step, and could have shut the door at her back, had he made any attempt to get in; and she called over her shoulder to Lucy Maria, and whispered something, and gave her, I suppose, the card; and in a minute more Miss Rumble opened the door wide, and showed "the gentleman" up stairs, and told him on the lobby she hoped he would not be offended, but that she had such positive orders as to leave her no choice; and that in fact Mr. Dingwell was in the drawing-room, and would be happy to see him, and almost at the same moment she threw open the door and introduced him, with a little courtesy, and—

"This way, please sir; here's the gentleman, please sir."

There he *did* find Mr. Dingwell, smoking a cigar, in his fez, slippers and pea-green silk dressing-gown, with a cup of black coffee on the little table beside him, his *Times* and a few magazines there also. He looked in vulgar parlance "seedy," like an old fellow who had been raking the night before, and was wofully tired, and in no very genial temper.

"Will you excuse an old fellow, Mr. Verney, and take a chair for yourself? I'm not very well to-day. I suppose, from your note, you thought I had quitted London. It was not to be expected so old a plant should take root; but it's sometimes not worth moving 'em again, and they remain where they are, to wither—ha, ha, ha!"

"I should be sorry it was for any such purpose; but I am happy to find you still here, for I was really anxious to call and thank you."

"*Anxious*—to *thank me!* Are you really *serious*, Mr. Verney?" said Dingwell, lowering his cigar again, and looking with a stern smile in his visitor's face.

"Yes, sir; I *did* wish to call and thank you," said Cleve, determined not to grow angry; "and I *am* here to say that we are very much obliged."

"*We?*"

"Yes; my uncle and I."

"Oh! yes; well, it *is* something. I hope the coronet becomes him, and his robes. I venture to say he has got up the masquerading properties already; it's a pity there isn't a coronation or something at hand; and I suppose he'll put up a monument to my dear friend Arthur—a mangy old dog he was, you'll allow me to say, though he was my friend, and very kind to me; and I, the most grateful fellow he ever met; I've been more grieved about him than any other person I can remember, upon my soul and honor—and a devilish dirty dog he was."

This last reflection was delivered in a melancholy aside, after the manner of a soliloquy, and Cleve did not exactly know how to take this old fellow's impertinence.

"Arthur Verney—poor fellow! your uncle. He had a great deal of the pride of his family, you know, along with utter degradation. Filthy dog!—pah!" And Mr. Dingwell lifted both his hands, and actually used that unpleasant instrument called a "spittoon," which is seen in taverns, to give expression, it seemed, to his disgust.

"But he had his pride, dear Arthur; yes, he was proud, and wished for a tombstone. When he was dying he said, 'I should like a monument—not of course in a cathedral, for I have been living so darkly, and a good deal talked about; but there's an old church or abbey near Malory (that I'm sure was the name of the place) where our family has been accustomed to bury its quiet respectabilities and its *mauvais sujets*; and I think they might give me a pretty little monument there, quite quietly.' I think you'll do it, for you're a grateful person, and like thanking people; and he certainly did a great deal for his family by going out of it, and the little vanity of a monument would not cost much, and, as he said himself, no one would ever see it; and I promised, if I ever had an opportunity, to mention the subject to your uncle.'

Cleve bowed.

"'And,' said he, 'there will be a little conflict of feeling. I am sure they'd like the monument, but they would not make an ostentation of me. But remind them of my Aunt Deborah. Poor old girl! she ran away with a fiddler.' Egad, sir, these were his very words, and I've found, on inquiring here, they were quite true. She ran away with a fiddler—egad! and I don't know how many little fiddlers she had; and, by Jove, he said if I came back I should recognise a possible cousin in every street-fiddler I met with, for music is a talent that runs in families. And so, when Atropos cut his fiddle-string, and he died, she took, he said, to selling mutton-pies, for her maintenance, in Chester, and being properly proud as a Verney, though as a fiddler's widow necessitous, he said she used to cry, behind her little table, 'Hot mutton-pies!' and then, *sotto voce*, 'I hope nobody hears me;' and you may rely upon that family anecdote, for I had it from the lips of that notorious member of your family, your uncle Arthur, and he hoped that they would comply with the tradition, and reconcile the Verney pride with Verney exigencies, and concede him the secret celebration of a monument.

"If you are serious—?"

"Serious about a monument, sir! who the devil could be lively on such a subject?" and Mr. Dingwell looked unaccountably angry, and ground his teeth, and grew white. "A monument, cheap and nasty, I dare say; it isn't much for a poor devil from whom you've got every thing. I suppose you'll speak to your uncle, sir?"

"I'll speak to him, sir."

"Yes, *do*, pray, and prevail. I'm not very trong, sir, and there's something that remains or you and me to do, sir."

"What is that?"

"To rot under ground, sir; and as I shall go irst, it would be pleasant to me to be able to resent your affectionate regards to your uncle, hen I meet him, and tell him that you had omplied with his little fancy about the monument, as he seemed to make a point that his ame should not be blotted totally from the recrds of his family."

Cleve was rather confirmed in his suspicions bout the sanity of this odious old man—as well e might—and, at all events, was resolved to ndure him without a row.

"I shall certainly remember, and mention all ou have said, sir," said Cleve.

"Yes," said the old man, in a grim meditaion, looking down, and he chucked away the tump of his cigar. "It's a devilish hard case, Kismet!" he muttered.

"I suppose you find our London climate very ifferent from that you have grown accustomed o?" said Cleve, approaching the point on which e desired some light.

"I lived in London for a long time, sir. was—as perhaps you know—junior partner n the great Greek house of Prinkipi & Dingrell—d—n Prinkipi! say I. He ran us into rouble sir; then came a smash, sir, and Prinki lavented, making a scape-goat of me, the ost villified and persecuted Greek merchant at ever came on 'Change! And, egad! if hey could catch me, even now, I believe they'd ury me in a dungeon for the rest of my days, hich, in that case, would not be many. I'm ere, therefore, I may say, at the risk of my life."

"A very anxious situation, indeed, Mr. Dingrell; and I conclude you intend but a short tay here?"

"Quite the contrary, sir. I mean to stay s long as I please, and that may be as long as live."

"Oh! I had thought from something that Mr. Larkin said," began Cleve Verney.

"Larkin! He's a religious man, and does ot put his candle under a bushel. He's very articular to say his prayers; and provided he ays *them*, he takes leave to say what he likes eside."

Mr. Dingwell was shooting his arrows as reely as Cupid does; but Cleve did not take his satire for more than its worth.

"He may think it natural I should wish to e gone, and so I do," continued the old man, etting down his coffee-cup, "if I could get way without the trouble of going, or was sure f a tolerably comfortable berth, at my journey's nd; but I am old, and traveling shakes me to ieces, and I have enemies elsewhere, as well s here; and the newspapers have been printng sketches of my life and adventures, and oking up attention about me, and awakening the lumbering recollection of persons by whom I ad been, in effect, forgotten *everywhere*. No rest for the wicked, sir. I'm pursued; and, in fact, what little peace I might have enjoyed in this, the closing period of my life, has been irreparably wrecked by my visit and public appearance here, to place your uncle, and by consequence *you*, in the position now secured to you. What do you think of me?"

"I think, sir, you have done us a great service; and I know we are very much obliged," said Cleve, with his most engaging smile.

"And do you know what I think of myself? I think I'm a d—d fool, unless I look for some advantage to myself."

"Don't you think, sir, you have found it, on the whole, advantageous, your coming here?" insinuated Cleve.

"Barren, sir, as a voyage on the Dead Sea. The test is this—what have I by it? not five pounds, sir, in the world. Now, I've opened my mind a little to you upon this subject, and I'm of the same mind still; and if I've opened Aladdin's garden to you, with its fruitage of emeralds, rubies, and so forth, I expect to fill my snuff-box with the filings and chippings of your gigantic jewelry."

Cleve half repented his visit, now that the presence of the insatiable Mr. Dingwell, and his evident appetite for more money, had justified the representations of the suspected attorney.

"I shall speak to Mr. Larkin on the subject," said Cleve Verney.

"D—n Larkin, sir! speak to me."

"But, Mr. Dingwell, I have really, as I told you before, no authority to speak; and no one has the least power in the matter but my uncle."

"And what the devil did you come here for?" demanded Mr. Dingwell, suddenly blazing up into one of his unaccountable furies; "I suppose you expected me to congratulate you on your success, and to ask leave to see your uncle in his coronet—ha, ha, ha!—or his cap and bells, or whatever he wears. By —, sir, I hope he holds his head high, and struts like a peacock, and has pleasant dreams; time enough for nightmares, sir, hereafter, eh? Uneasy rests the head that wears the crown! Good-evening, sir; I'll talk to Mr. Larkin."

And with these words Mr. Dingwell got up, looking unaccountably angry, and made a half-sarcastic, half-furious bow, wherewith he dismissed Mr. Cleve Verney, with more distinct convictions than ever that the old gentleman was an unmitigated beast.

CHAPTER XLI.

IN LORD VERNEY'S LIBRARY.

Who should light upon Cleve that evening as he walked homeward but our friend Tom Sedley, who was struck by the anxious pallor and melancholy of his face.

Good-natured Sedley took his arm, and said he, as they walked on together—

"Why don't you smile on your luck, Cleve?"

"How do you know what my luck is?"

"All the world knows that pretty well."

"All the world knows every thing but its own business."

"Well, people do say that your uncle has lately got the oldest peerage—one of them—in England, and an estate of thirty-three thousand a year, for one thing, and that you are heir-presumptive to those trifles."

"And that heirs-presumptive often get nothing but their heads in their hands."

"No, you'll not come Saint Denis nor any other martyr over us, my dear boy; we know very well how you stand in that quarter."

"It's pleasant to have one's domestic relations so happily arranged by such very competent persons. I'm much obliged to all the world for the parental interest it takes in my private concerns."

"And it also strikes some people that a perfectly safe seat in the House of Commons is not to be had for nothing by every fellow who wishes it."

"But suppose I *don't* wish it."

"Oh! we may suppose any thing."

Tom Sedley laughed as he said this, and Cleve looked at him sharply, but saw no uncomfortable meaning in his face.

"There is no good in talking of what one has not tried," said he. "If you had to go down to that tiresome House of Commons every time it sits; and had an uncle like mine to take you to task every time you missed a division—you'd soon be as tired of it as I am."

"I see, my dear fellow, you are bowed down under a load of good luck." They were at the door of Tom Sedley's lodgings by this time, and opening it, he continued, "I've something in my room to show you; just run up with me for a minute, and you'll say I'm a conjuror."

Cleve, not to be got into good spirits that evening, followed him up stairs, thinking of something else.

"I've got a key to your melancholy, Cleve," said he, leading the way into his drawing-room. "Look *there*," and he pointed to a clever copy in crayons of the famous Beatrice Cenci, which he had hung over his chimney-piece.

Tom Sedley laughed, looking in Cleve's eyes. A slight flush had suddenly tinged his visitor's face, as he saw the portrait. But he did not seem to enjoy the joke; on the contrary, he looked a little embarrassed and angry. "That's Guido's portrait—well, what about it?" he asked, rather surlily.

"Yes, of course; but who is it like?"

"Very few, I dare say, for *it* is very pretty; and except on canvas, there is hardly such a thing as a pretty girl to be seen. Is that all? for the life of me I can't see where the conjuring lies."

"Not in the picture, but the *likeness;* don't you see it?"

"No," said Cleve; "I must go; are you coming?"

"Not see it!" said Tom. "Why, if it were painted for her, it could not be more like. Why, it's the Flower of Cardyllian, the Star of Malory. It is *your* Miss Fanshawe—my Margaret—our Miss Margaret Fanshawe. I'm making the fairest division I can, you see; and I would not be without it for all the world."

"She would be very much gratified if she heard it. It is so flattering to a young lady to have a fellow buy a colored lithograph, and call it by her name, and crack jokes and spout mock heroics over it. It is the modern way of celebrating a lady's name. Don't you seriously think, Tom Sedley, it would be better to smash it with a poker, and throw it into the fire, than go on taking such liberties with any young lady's name?"

"Upon my honor, Cleve, you mistake me; you do me great injustice. You used to laugh at me, you know, when, I'm quite sure, thinking over it now, you were awfully gone about her yourself. I never told any one but you why I bought that picture; it isn't a lithograph, but painted, or drawn, or whatever they call it, with chalks, and it cost five guineas; and no one but you ever heard me mention Miss Fanshawe's name, except the people at Cardyllian, and then only as I might mention any other, and always with respect."

"What does it signify?" interrupted Cleve, in the middle of a forced yawn. "I am tired to-day, and cross—don't you see; and man delights not me, nor woman neither. So if you're coming, come, for I must go."

"And really, Cleve, the Cardyllian people do say (I've had letters) that you were awfully in love with her yourself, and always haunting those woods of Malory while she was there, and went away immediately she left, and have never been seen in Cardyllian since."

"Those Cretans were always liars, Tom Sedley. That comes direct from the Club. I can fancy old Shrapnell in the light of the bow-window, composing his farrago of dreams, and lies, and chuckling and cackling over it."

"Well, I don't say that Shrapnell had any thing to do with it, but I did hear at first they thought you were gone about little Agnes Edgerage."

"Oh! they found that out—did they?" said Cleve. "But you know those people—I mean the Cardyllian people—as well, or better than I, and really, as a kindness to me, and to save me the trouble of endless explanations to my uncle, I would be so much obliged if you would not repeat their follies—unless, of course, I happen to believe them."

Cleve did not look more cheerful as he drove away in a cab which he took to get rid of his friend Tom Sedley. It was mortifying to find how vain were his clever stratagems, and how the rustic chapmen of that Welsh village and their wives had penetrated his diplomacy. He thought he had killed the rumors about Malory, and yet that grain of mustard seed had grown while his eye was off it, with a gigantic luxuriance, and now was large enough to form a fea-

ture in the landscape, and quite visible from the windows of Ware—if his uncle should happen to visit that mansion — overtopping the roofs and chimneys of Cardyllian. His uncle meditated an early visit to Cardyllian, and a short stay at Ware, before the painters and gilders got possession of the house; a sort of ovation in demi-toilette, grand and friendly, and a foretaste of the splendors that were coming. Cleve did hope that those beasts would be quiet while Lord Verney was (as he in his grand manner termed it) "among them." He knew the danger of a vague suspicion seizing on his mind, how fast it clung, how it fermented like yeast, fantastic and obstinate as a foolish woman's jealousy; and as men sometimes will, he even magnified his danger. Altogether, Cleve was not causelessly anxious and alarmed. He had in the dark to navigate a channel which even in broad day-light tasked a good steersman.

When Cleve reached Verney House it was eight o'clock. His lordship had ordered his brougham at half-past, and was going down to the House; he had something to say on Lord Frompington's bill. It was not very new, nor very deep, nor very much; but he had been close at it for the last three weeks. He had amused many gentlemen—and sometimes even ladies—at many dinner-parties with a very exact recital of his views. I can not say they were precisely *his*, for they were culled, perhaps unconsciously, from a variety of magazine articles and pamphlets, which happened to take Lord Verney's views of the question.

It is not given to any mortal to have his heart's desire in every thing. Lord Verney had a great deal of this world's good things, wealth, family, rank. But he chose to aim at official station, and here his stars denied him.

Some people thought him a goose, and some only a bore. He was, as we know, pompous, conceited, obstinate, also weak and dry. His grandfather had been a cabinet minister, respectable and silent, and was not he wiser, brighter, and more learned than his grandfather? "Why on earth should not *he?*" His influence commanded two boroughs, and virtually two counties. The minister, therefore, treated him with distinction; and spoke of him confidentially as horribly foolish, impracticable, and at time positively impertinent.

Lord Verney was subject to small pets and huffs, and sometimes was affronted with the Premier for four or five weeks together, although the fact escaped his notice. And when the viscount relented, he would make him a visit to quiet his mind, and show him that friendly relations were re-established; and the minister would say, "Here comes that d—d Verney; I suppose I must give him half an hour!" And when the peer departed, thinking he had made the minister happy, the minister was seriously debating whether Lord Verney's boroughs were worth the price of Lord Verney's society.

His lordship was now in that sacred apartment, his library; where not even Cleve had a right to disturb him uninvited. Preliminaries, however, were now arranged; the servant announced him, and Cleve was commanded to enter.

"I have just had a line to say I shall be in time at half past ten o'clock, about it. Frompington's bill won't be on till then; and take that chair and sit down, about it, won't you? I've a good many things on my mind; people put things upon me. *Some* people think I have a turn for business, and they ask me to consider and direct matters about *theirs*, and I do what I can. There was poor Wimbledon, who died, about it, seven years ago. You remember Wimbledon—or—I say—you either remember him or you don't remember him; but in either case it's of no importance. Let me see; Lady Wimbledon—she's connected with you, about it—your mother, remotely—remotely also with us, the Verneys. I've had a world of trouble about her settlements—I can't describe—I can't describe—I was not well advised, in fact, to accept the trust at all. Long ago, when poor Frompington — I mean Wimbledon, of course—have I been saying Wimbledon?"

Cleve at once satisfied him.

"Yes, of course. When poor Wimbledon looked as healthy and as strong as I do at this moment, about it—a long time ago. Poor Wimbledon!—he fancied, I suppose, I had some little turn, about it, for business—*some* of my friends *do*—and I accepted the trust when poor Wimbledon looked as little likely to be hurried into eternity, about it, as I do. I had a regard for him, poor Wimbledon, and he had a respect for me, and thought I could be of use to him after he was dead, and I have endeavored, and people think I *have*. But Lady Wimbledon, the dowager, poor woman. She's very long-winded, poor soul, and gives me an infinity of trouble. One can't say to a lady, 'You are detaining me; you are beating about the bush; you fail to come to the point.' It would be taking a liberty, or something, about it. I had not seen Lady Wimbledon, simple 'oman, for seven years or more. It's a very entangled business, and I confess it seems rather unfair I should have my time, already sufficiently occupied with other, and as I think more important affairs, so seriously interrupted and abridged. There's going to be a bill filed—yes, and a great deal of annoyance. She has one unmarried daughter, Caroline, about it, who is not to have any power over her money till she is thirty-one. She's not that now. It was hardly fair to me, putting it in trust so long. She is a very superior person—a young woman one does not meet with every day, about it; and—and very apprehensive—a great deal of mind—quite unusual. Do you know her?"

The viscount raised his eyes toward the ceiling with a smile that was mysterious and pleased.

Cleve did know that young lady of eight-and-twenty, and her dowager mamma, "simple 'oman," who had pursued him with extraordinary spirit and tenacity for several years, but

that was past and over. Cleve experienced a thrill of pain at his heart. He suspected that the old torturing idea was again active in his uncle's mind.

"Yes, he *did* know them—ridiculous old woman; and the girl—he believed she'd marry any one; he fancied she would have done *him* that honor at one time, and he fancied that the trust, if it was to end when she was thirty-one, must have expired long ago."

"My dear Cleve, don't you think that's rather an odd way of speaking of a young lady? People used not in my time—that is, when I was a young man of two or three-and-twenty, about it—to talk so of young ladies. It was not considered a thing that ought to be done. I—I never heard a word of the kind."

Lord Verney's chivalry had actually called a little pink flush to his old cheeks, and he looked very seriously still at the cornice, and tapped a little nervous tattoo with his pencil-case on the table as he did so.

"I really did not mean—I only meant—in fact, uncle, I tell *you* every thing; and poor Caroline is *so* much elder than I, it always struck me as amusing."

"Their man of business in matters of law is Mr. Larkington, about it. *Our* man, you know—you know him?"

"Oh, yes. They could not do better. Mr. Larkin—a very shrewd fellow. I went, by the bye, to see that old man, Dingwell."

"Ah, well, very good. We'll talk of that by and by, if you please; but it has been occurring to my mind, Cleve, that—that you should look about you. In fact, if you don't like one young lady, you may like another. It strikes me I never saw a greater number of pretty young women, about it, than there are at present in town. I do assure you at that ball—where was it?—the place I saw you, and sent you down to the division—don't you remember?—and next day, I told you, I think, they never said so much as 'thank you' for what I had done, though it was the saving of them, about it. I say I was quite struck; the spectacle was quite charming, about it, from no other cause; and you know there is Ethel—I always said Ethel—and there *can* be no objection there; and I have distinct reasons for wishing you to be well connected, about it—in a political sense—and there is no harm in a little *money;* and, in fact, I have made up my mind, my dear Cleve, it is indispensable, and you *must* marry. I'm quite clear upon the point."

"I can promise you, my dear uncle, that I shan't marry without your approbation."

"Well, I rather took that for granted," observed Lord Verney, with dry solemnity.

"Of course. I only say it's very difficult sometimes to see what's wisest. I have you, I know, uncle, to direct me; but you must allow I have also your example. You relied entirely upon yourself for your political position. You made it without the aid of any such step, and I should be only too proud to follow your example."

"A — yes — but the cases are different; there's a difference, about it. As I said in the debate on the Jewish Disabilities, there are no two cases, about it, precisely parallel; and I've given my serious consideration to the subject, and I am satisfied that for every reason you ought to choose a wife *immediately*; there's no reason against it, and you ought to choose a wife, about it, immediately; and my mind is made up quite decidedly, and I have spoken repeatedly; but now I tell you I recognize no reason for farther delay—no reason against the step, and every reason for it; and in short, I shall have no choice but to treat any dilatory procedure in the matter as amounting to a distinct trifling with my known wishes, desire, and opinion."

And the Right Hon. Lord Viscount Verney smote his thin hand emphatically at these words upon the table, as he used to do in his place in the House.

Then followed an impressive silence, the peer holding his head high, and looking a little frowned; and Cleve very pale, with the ghost of the smile he had worn a few minutes before.

There are instruments that detect and measure with a beautiful accuracy the presence and force of invisible influences — heat, electricity, air, moisture. If among all these "meters"—electronometers, hygrometers, anemometers—*odynometer*, to detect the presence and measure the intensity of hidden *pain*, were procurable, and applied to the breast of that pale, smiling young man at that moment, I wonder to what degree in its scale its index would have pointed!

Cleve intended to make some slight and playful remark, he knew not what, but his voice failed him.

He had been thinking of this possibility—of this *hour* for many a day, as some men will of the day of judgment, and putting it aside as a hateful thought, possibly never to be embodied in *fact*, and here it was come upon him, suddenly, inevitably, in all its terrors.

"Well, certainly, uncle—as you wish it. I must look about me—seriously. *I know* you wish me to be happy. I'm very grateful, you have always bestowed so much of your thought and care upon me—*too* good, a great deal."

So spoke the young man—white as that sheet of paper on which his uncle had been *penciling* two or three of what he called his thoughts—and almost as unconscious of the import of the words he repeated.

"I'm glad, my dear Cleve, you are sensible that I have been, I may say, kind; and now let me say that I think Ethel has a great deal in her favor; there are others, however, I am well aware, and there is time to look about, but I should wish something settled *this* season—in fact, before we break up, about it; in short I have, as I said, made up my mind. *I don't act* without reasons; I never do, and mine are conclusive; and it was on this topic, my dear Cleve, I wished to see you. And now I think you may wish to have some dinner. I'm afraid I've detained you here rather long."

And Lord Verney rose, and moved toward a ook-case with Hansard in it, to signify that the onference was ended, and that he desired to be lone in his study.

CHAPTER XLII.

AN OVATION.

CLEVE had no dinner; he had supped full of orrors. He got on his coat and hat, and apeared nowhere that evening, but took an imnense walk instead, in the hope I dare say of iring out his agony—perhaps simply because uietude and the faculty of uninterrupted thought vere unendurable.

Next day hope began a little to revive. An nventive mind is inexhaustible; and are not the esources of delay always considerable?

Who could have been acting upon his uncle's nind in this matter? The spring of Lord Verney's action was seldom quite within himself. All at once he recollected that he had come sudlenly upon what seemed an unusually secret conference between his uncle and Mr. Larkin about en days since; it was in the library. He was ure the conversation had some reference to him. His uncle looked both annoyed and embarrassed when he came into the room; even the practiced countenance of Mr. Larkin betrayed some faint signs of confusion.

Larkin he knew had been down in the neighborhood of Ware, and probably in Cardyllian. Had any thing reached him about the Malory romance? Mr. Larkin was a man who would not stick at trifles in hunting up evidence, and all that concerned *him* would now interest Mr. Larkin, and Cleve had too high an opinion of that gentleman's sagacity not to assume that if he had obtained the clew to his mystery he would make capital of the secret with Lord Verney. *Viscera magnorum domuum*—nothing like secret relations—confidences—and what might not come of this? Of course, the first result would be a peremptory order on which Lord Verney had spoken last night. The only safety for the young man, it will be concluded, is to marry him suitably forthwith.

And—by Jove!—a flash of light! He had it! The whole thing was clear now. Yes; *he* was to be married to Caroline Oldys, because Mr. Larkin was the professional right hand of that family, and so the attorney would glide ultimately into the absolute command of the House of Verney!

To think of that indescribably vulgar rogue's actually shaping the fortunes and regulating the future sufferings of Cleve Verney! How much of our miseries result from the folly of those who would serve us! Here was Viscount Verney with, as respected Cleve, the issues of life very much in his fingers, dropping through sheer imbecility into the coarse hands of that odious attorney!

Cleve trembled with rage as he thought of the degradation to which that pompous fool, Lord Verney, was consigning him, yet what was to be done? Cleve was absolutely at the disposal of the peer, and the peer was unconsciously placing himself in the hands of Mr. Larkin, to be worked like a puppet, and spoken for by the Pharisaical attorney.

Cleve's theory hung together plausibly. It would have been gross folly to betray his jealousy of the attorney, whose opportunities with his uncle he had no means of limiting or interrupting, and against whom he had as yet no case.

He was gifted with a pretty talent for dissimulation; Mr. Larkin congratulated himself in secret upon Cleve's growing esteem and confidence. The young gentleman's manner was gracious and even friendly to a degree that was quite marked, and the unsuspecting attorney would have been startled had he learned on a sudden how much he hated him.

Ware—that great house which all across the estuary, in which its princely front was reflected, made quite a feature in the landscape sketched by so many tourists from the pier on the shingle of Cardyllian on bright summer days—was about to be rehabilitated, and very splendid doings were to follow.

In the mean time, before the architects and contractors, the plumbers, and painters, and carpenters, and carvers, and gilders had taken possession, and before those wonderful artists in stucco who were to encrust and overspread the ceilings with noble designs, rich and elegant and light, of fruits and flowers and cupids, and from memory, not having read the guide-book of Cardyllian and its vicinity for more than a year, I should be afraid to say what arabesques, and imagery besides, had entered with their cements and their scaffolding; and before the three brother artists had got their passports for England who were to paint on the panels of the doors such festive pieces as Watteau loved. In short, before the chaos and confusion that attend the throes of that sort of creation had set in, Lord Verney was to make a visit of a few days to Ware, and was to visit Cardyllian and to receive a congratulatory address from the corporation of that ancient town, and to inspect the gas-works (which I am glad to say are hid away in a little hollow), and the two fountains which supply the town—constructed, as the inscription tells, at the expense of "the Right Honorable Kiffyn Fulke, Nineteenth Viscount Verney, and Twenty-ninth Baron Penruthyn, of Malory." What else his lordship was to see, and to do, and to say on the day of his visit, the county and other newspapers round about printed when the spectacle was actually over, and the great doings matter of history.

There were arches of evergreens and artificial flowers of paper, among which were very tolerable hollyhocks, though the roses were starting, under these. Lord Viscount Verney and the "distinguished party" who accompanied him passed up Castle Street to the town-hall, where

he was received by the mayor and town-councilors, accompanied and fortified by the town-clerk and other functionaries, all smiling except the mayor, on whom weighed the solemn responsibility of having to read the address, a composition, and no mean one, of the Rev. Doctor Splayfoot, who attended with parental anxiety "to see the little matter through," as he phrased it, and was so awfully engaged that Mrs. Splayfoot, who was on his arm, and asked him twice, in a whisper, whether the tall lady in purple silk was Lady Wimbledon, without receiving the slightest intimation that she was so much as heard, remarked testily that she hoped he would not write many more addresses, inasmuch as it made him ill-bred to that degree that if the town-hall had fallen during the reading, he never would have perceived it till he had shaken his ears in kingdom-come. Lord Verney read his answer, which there was much anxiety and pressure to hear.

"Now it really *was* be-autiful—*wasn't* it?" our friend Mrs. Jones the draper whispered, in particular reference to that part of it in which the viscount invoked the blessing of the Almighty upon himself and his doings, gracefully admitting that in contravention of the Divine will and the decrees of heaven, even he could not be expected to accomplish much, though with the best intentions. And Captain Shrapnell, who felt that the sentiment was religious, and was anxious to be conspicuous, standing with his hat in his hand, with a sublime expression of countenance, said in an audible voice—"*Amen*."

All this over, and the building inspected, the distinguished party were conducted by the mayor, the militia band accompanying their march —[air—"The Meeting of the Waters"]—to the "Fountains" in Gannon's Lane, to which I have already alluded.

Here they were greeted by a detachment of the Llanwthyn Temperance Union, headed by short, fat Thomas Pritchard, the interesting apostle of total abstinence, who used to preach on the subject alternately in Welsh and English in all the towns who would hear his gospel, in most of which he was remembered as having been repeatedly fined for public intoxication, and known by the familiar pet name of "Swipey Tom," before his remarkable conversion.

Mr. Pritchard now led the choir of the Llanwthyn Temperance Union, consisting of seven members, of various sizes, dressed in their Sunday costume, and standing in a row in front of fountain No. 1—each with his hat in his left hand and a tumbler of fair water in his right.

Good Mrs. Jones, who had a vague sense of fun, and remembered anedotes of the principal figure in this imposing spectacle, did laugh a little modestly into her handkerchief, and answered the admonitory jog of her husband's elbow by pleading—"*Poor* fellows! Well, you know it *is* odd—there's no denying *that*, you *know*;" and from the background were heard some jeers from the excursionists who visited Cardyllian for that gala, which kept Hughes, the Cardyllian policeman, and Evans, the other "horney," who had been drafted from Llwinar, to help to overawe the turbulent, very hot and active during that part of the ceremony.

Particularly unruly was John Swillers, who having failed as a publican in Liverpool, in consequence of his practice of drinking the greater part of his own stock in trade, had migrated to "The Golden Posts" in Church Street, Cardyllian, where he ceased to roll his barrel, set up his tressels, and had tabernacled for the present, drinking his usual proportion of his own liquor, and expecting the hour of a new migration.

Over the heads of the spectators and the admiring natives of Cardyllian were heard such exhortations as "Go it, Swipey," "There's pluck in that," "Five shillin' for his worship, Swipey," "I say, Swipey Tom, pay your score at the Golden Posts, will ye?" "Will ye go a bit on the stretcher, Swipey?" "Here's two horneys as 'll take ye home arter that."

And these interruptions, I am sorry to say, continued, notwithstanding the remonstrances which Mr. Hughes addressed almost pathetically to John Swillers of the Golden Posts, as a respectable citizen of Cardyllian, one from whose position the police were led to expect assistance and the populace an example. There was something in these expostulations which struck John Swillers, for he would look with a tipsy solemnity in Hughes's face while he delivered them, and once took his hand, rather affectionately, and said, "That's your sort." But invariably these unpleasant interpellations were resumed, and did not cease until this moral exhibition had ended with the last verse of the temperance song, chanted by the deputation with great vigor, in unison, and which, as the reader will perceive, had in it a Bacchanalian character, which struck even the gravest listeners as a hollow mockery:

Refreshing more than sinful swipes,
The weary man
Who quaffs a can,
That sparkling foams through leaden pipes.

CHORUS.

Let every man
Then, fill his can,
And fill the glass
Of every lass
In brimming bumpers sparkling clear,
To pledge the health of Verney's peer!

And then came a chill and ghastly "hip-hip-hurrah," and with some gracious inquiries on Lord Verney's part, as to the numbers, progress, and finances of "their interesting association," and a subscription of ten pounds, which Mr. John Swillers took leave to remark, "wouldn't be laid out on water, by *no means*," *the viscount*, with grand and radiant Mr. Larkin at his elbow, and frequently murmuring in his ear—to the infinite disgust of my friend, the Cardyllian attorney, thus outstrutted and outcrowed on his own rustic elevation—was winning golden opinions from all sorts of men.

The party went on, after the wonders of the town had been exhausted, to look at Malory, and thence return to a collation, at which toasts were toasted and speeches spoken, and Captain Shrapnell spoke, by arrangement, for the ladies of Cardyllian in his usual graceful and facetious manner, with all the puns and happy allusions which a month's private diligence, and, I am sorry to say, some shameless plagiarisms from three old numbers of poor Tom Hood's "Comic Annual," could get together, and the gallant captain concluded by observing that the noble lord whom they had that day the honor and happiness to congratulate, intended, he understood, every thing that was splendid and liberal and handsome, and that the town of Cardyllian, in the full radiance of the meridian sunshine, whose golden splendor proceeded from the *south* — "The cardinal point at which the great house of Ware is visible from the Green of Cardyllian"—(hear, hear, and laughter)—"there remained but one grievance to be redressed, and that set to rights, every ground of complaint would slumber forever, he might say, in the great bed of Ware"—(loud cheers and laughter) —"and what was that complaint? He was instructed by his fair, lovely, and beautiful clients —the ladies of Cardyllian—some of whom he saw in the gallery, and some still more happily situated at the festive board"—(a laugh). "Well, he was, he repeated, instructed by them to say that there was one obvious duty which the noble lord owed to his ancient name—to the fame of his public position—to the coronet, whose golden band encircled his distinguished brow—and above all, to the ancient feudal dependency of Cardyllian"—(hear, hear)—"and that was to select from his country's beauty, fascination, and accomplishment, and he might say loveliness, a partner worthy to share the ermine and the coronet and the name and the—the ermine (hear, hear) of the ancient house of Verney" (loud cheers); "and need he add that when the selection was made, it was hoped and trusted and aspired after, that the selection would not be made a hundred miles away from the ivied turrets, the feudal ruins, the gushing fountains, and the spacious town-hall of Cardyllian" —(loud and long continued cheering, amid which the gallant captain, very hot, and red, and smiling furiously, sat down with a sort of lurch, and drank off a glass of champagne, and laughed and giggled a little in his chair while the "cheering and laughter" continued).

And Lord Verney rose, not at all hurt by this liberty, very much amused on the contrary, and in high good humor his lordship said—

"Allow me to say—I am sure you will"—(hear, hear, and cries of "We will")—"I say, I am sure you will permit me to say that the ladies of Cardyllian, a-a-about it, seem to me to have chosen a very eloquent spokesman in the gallant, and I have no doubt, distinguished officer who has just addressed the house. We have all been entertained by the eloquence of Captain Scollop"—[here the mayor deferentially whispered something to the noble orator]—"I beg pardon—Captain Grapnell—who sits at the table, with his glass of wine, about it—and very good wine it is—his glass, I say, where it should be, in his hand" (hear, hear, and laughter, and "You got it there, captain"). "And I assure the gallant captain I did not mean to be severe —only we are all joking—and I do say that he has his hand—my gallant friend, Captain Grabblet, has it—where every gallant officer's ought to be, about it, and that is, upon his weapon"—(hear, hear, laughter, and cries of "His lordship's too strong for you, captain"). "I don't mean to hurt him, though, about it" (renewed cries of hear, and laughter), during which the captain shook his ears a little, smiling into his glass rather foolishly, as a man who was getting the worst of it, and knew it, but took it all pleasantly. "No, it would not be fair to the ladies, about it" (renewed laughter and cheering), "and all I *will* say is this, about it—there are parts of Captain Scraplet's speech, which I shan't undertake to answer at this moment. I feel that I am trespassing, about it, for a much longer time than I had intended" (loud cries of "No, no, Go on, go on," and cheering), during which the mayor whispered something to the noble lord, who, having heard it twice or thrice, repeated, nodded to the mayor in evident apprehension, and when silence was restored proceeded to say, "I have just heard, without meaning to say any thing unfair of the gallant captain, Captain Scalpel, that he is hardly himself qualified to give me the excellent advice, about it, which I received from him; for they tell me that he has rather run away, about it, from his colors, on that occasion." (Great laughter and cheering.) "I should be sorry to wound Captain Shat—Scat —Scrap, the gallant captain, to wound him, I say, even in front." (Laughter, cheering, and a voice from the gallery "Hit him hard, and he won't swell," "Order.") "But I think I was bound to make that observation in the interest of the ladies of Cardyllian, about it" (renewed laughter); "and, for my part, I promise my gallant friend—my—captain—about it—that although I may take some time, like himself" (loud laughter); "yet although I can not let fall, about it, any observation that may commit me, yet I do promise to meditate on the excellent advice he has been so good as to give me, about it." And the noble lord resumed his seat amid uproarious cheering and general laughter, wondering what had happened to put him in the vein, and regretting that some of the people of Downing Street had not been present to hear it, and witness its effect.

CHAPTER XLIII.

OLD FRIENDS ON THE GREEN.

Tom Sedley saw the Etherage girls on the geen, and instead of assisting, as he had intended, at the great doings in the town, he walked over to have a talk with them.

People who know Cardyllian remember the two seats, partly stone, partly wood, which are placed on the green, near the margin of the sea—seats without backs—on which you can sit with equal comfort, facing the water and the distant mountains, or the white-fronted town and old Castle of Cardyllian. Looking toward this latter prospect, the ladies sat, interested, no doubt, though they preferred a distant view, in the unusual bustle of the quiet old place.

On one of these seats sat Charity and Agnes, and as he approached, smiling, up got Charity and walked some steps toward him, looking kindly, but not smiling, for that was not her wont, and with her thin hand in dog-skin glove extended to greet him.

"How are you, Thomas Sedley? when did you come?" asked Miss Charity, much gladder to see him than she appeared.

"I arrived this morning; you're all well, I hope;" he was looking at Agnes, and would have got away from Miss Charity, but that she held him still by the hand.

"All very well, thank you, except Agnes. I don't think she's very well. I have ever so much to tell you when you and I have a quiet opportunity, but not now,"—she was speaking in a low tone;—"and now go and ask Agnes how she is."

So he did. She smiled a little languidly, he thought, and was not looking very strong, but prettier than ever—so *very* pretty! She blushed too, very brilliantly, as he approached; it would have been very flattering had he not seen Cleve Verney walking quickly over the green toward the Etherage group. For whom was the blush? Two gentlemen had fired simultaneously.

"Your bird? I rather think *my* bird?—isn't it?"

Now Tom Sedley did not think the bird his, and he felt, somehow, strangely vexed. And he got through his greeting uncomfortably; his mind was away with Cleve Verney, who was drawing quickly near.

"Oh! Mr. Verney, *what* a time it is since we saw you last!" exclaimed emphatic Miss Charity; "I really began to think you'd *never* come."

"Very good of you, Miss Etherage, to think about me."

"And you never gave me your subscription for our poor old woman, last winter!"

"Oh! my subscription? I'll give it now—what was it to be—a pound?"

"No, you promised only ten shillings, but it *ought* to be a pound. I think less would be *shameful*."

"Then, Miss Agnes, shall it be a pound?" he said, turning to her with a laugh—with his fingers in his purse, "whatever you say I'll do."

"*Agnes*—of *course* a pound," said Charity, in her nursery style of admonition.

"Charity says it must be a pound," answered Agnes.

"And *you* say so?"

"Of course I must."

"Then a pound it *is*—and mind," he added, laughing, and turning to Miss Charity with the coin in his fingers, "I'm to figure in your book of benefactors—your golden book of saints or *martyrs*, rather, but you need not put down my name, only 'The old woman's friend,' or 'A lover of flannel,' or 'A promoter of petticoats,' or any other benevolent alias you think becoming."

"'The old woman's friend,' will do very nicely," said Charity gravely. "Thank you, Mr. Verney, and we were *so* glad to hear that your uncle had succeeded at last to the peerage. He can be of such *use*—you really would be—he and you *both*, Mr. Verney—quite amazed and astounded, if you knew how much poverty there is in this town."

"It's well he does not know just now, for he wants all his wits about him. This is a critical occasion, you know, and the town expects great things from a practiced orator. I've stolen away just for five minutes, to ask you the news. We are at Ware, for a few days, only two or three friends with us. They came across in my boat to-day. We are going to set all the tradespeople on earth loose upon the house in a few days. It is to be done in an incredibly short time; and my uncle is talking of getting down some of his old lady relations to act chaperon, and we hope to have you all over there. You know it's all made up, that little coldness between my uncle and your father. I'm so glad. Your father wrote him such a nice note to-day explaining his absence—he never goes into a crowd, he says—and Lord Verney wrote him a line to say if he would allow him he would go up to Hazelden to pay his respects this afternoon."

This move was a suggestion of Mr. Larkin's, who was pretty well up in election strategy.

"I've ascertained, my lord, he's good for a hundred and thirty-seven votes in the county, and your lordship has managed him with such consummate tact that a very little more will, with the Divine blessing, induce the happiest, and I may say, considering the disparity of your lordship's relations and his, the most *delicate* feelings on his part—resulting, in fact, in your lordship's obtaining the absolute command of the constituency. You were defeated my lord, last time, by only forty-three votes, with his influence against you. If your lordship were to start your nephew, Mr. Cleve Verney, for it next time, having made your ground good with him, he would be returned, humanly speaking, by a sweeping majority."

"So, Lord Verney's going up to see papa! Agnes, *we* ought to be at home. He *must* have luncheon."

"No—a thousand thanks—but all that's explained. There's luncheon to be *in the town-hall*—it's part of the programme—and speeches—and all that kind of rubbish; so he can only run up for a few minutes, just to say, 'How do

ye do?' and away again. So, pray, don't think of going all that way, and he'll come here to be introduced, and make your acquaintance; and now tell me all your news."

"Well, those odd people went away from Malory"—began Charity.

"Oh, yes, I heard, I think, something of that," said Cleve, intending to change the subject, perhaps. But Miss Charity went on, for in that eventless scene an occurrence of any kind is too precious to be struck out of the record on any ground.

"They went away as mysteriously as they came—almost—and so suddenly—"

"You forget, Charity, dear, Mr. Verney was at Ware when they went, and here two or three times after they left Malory."

"So I *was*," said Cleve, with an uneasy glance at Tom Sedley, "I *knew* I had heard something of it."

"Oh, yes, and they say that the old man was both mad and in debt."

"What a combination!" said Cleve.

"Yes, I assure you, and a Jew came down with twenty or thirty bailiffs—I'm only telling you what Mr. Apjohn heard, and the people here tell us—and a mad doctor, and ever so many people with straight waistcoats, and they surrounded Malory; but he was gone!—not a human being knew where—and that handsome girl, wasn't she quite *bee-au-ti-ful?*"

"Oh, what every one says, you know, *must* be true," said Cleve.

"What do *you* say?" she urged upon Tom Sedley.

"Oh, I say ditto to every one, of course."

"Well, I should think so, for you know you are quite desperately in love with her," said Miss Charity.

"*I?* Why, I really never spoke to her in all my life. Now if you had said Cleve Verney."

"Oh, yes! If you had named *me*. But, by Jove, there they go. Do you see? My uncle and the mayor, and all the lesser people, trooping away to the town-hall. Good-bye! I haven't another moment. You'll be here, I *hope*, when we get out; *do*, *pray*. I have not a moment."

And he meant a glance for Miss Agnes, but it lost itself in air, for that young lady was looking down, in a little reverie on the grass, at the tip of her tiny boot.

"*There's* old Miss Christian *out*, I *declare*," exclaimed Charity. "Did you ever *hear* of such a thing? I *wonder* whether doctor knows she's out to day. I'll just go and speak to her. If he doesn't, I'll simply tell her she's *mad*."

And away marched Miss Charity, bent upon finding out, as she said, all about it.

"Agnes," said Tom Sedley, "it seemed to me you were not glad to see me. Are you vexed with me?"

"Vexed? No, indeed!" she said, gently, and looking up with a smile.

"And your sister said—" Tom paused, for he did not know whether Charity's whisper about her not having been "very strong" might not be a confidence.

"*What* does Charity say?" asked Agnes almost sharply, while a little flush appeared in her cheeks.

"Well, she said she did not think you were so strong as usual. That was all."

"That was *all*—no great consequence," said she, with a little smile upon the grass and sea-pinks—a smile that was bitter.

"You can't think I meant that, little Agnes, *I* of all people; but I never was good at talking. And you *know* I did not mean that."

"People often say—*I* do, I know—what they mean without intending it," she answered, carelessly. "I *know* you would not make a rude speech—I am sure of that; and as to what we say accidentally, can it signify very much? Mr. Verney said he was coming back after the speeches, and Lord Verney, he said, didn't he? I wonder you don't look in at the town-hall. You could make us laugh, by telling all about it by and by—that is, if we happen to see you again.

"Of *course* you should see me again."

"I meant this evening; to-morrow I am sure we should," said she.

"If I went there; but I am not going. I think that old fellow, Lord Verney, Cleve's uncle, is an impertinent old muff. Every one knows he's a muff, though he is Cleve's uncle; he gave me just one finger to-day, and looked at me as if I ought to be anywhere but where I was. I have as good a right as he to be in Cardyllian, and I venture to say the people like me agreat deal better than they like him, or ever will."

"And so you punish him by refusing your countenance to this—what shall I call it?—gala."

"Oh! of course you take the Verneys' part against me; they are swells, and I am a nobody."

He thought Miss Agnes colored a little at this remark. The blood grows sensitive and capricious when people are ailing, and a hint is enough to send it to or fro; but she said only—

"I never heard of the feud before. I thought that you and Mr. Verney were very good friends."

"So we are; so we *are*—Cleve and I. Of course, I was speaking of the old lord. Cleve, of course, no one ever hears any thing but praises of Cleve. I suppose I ought to beg your pardon for having talked as I did of old Lord Verney; it's petty treason, isn't it, to talk lightly of a Verney, in Cardyllian or its neighborhood? said Sedley, a little sourly.

"I don't know *that;* but I dare say if you mean to ask leave to fish or shoot, it might be as well not to attack them."

"Well, I shan't in your hearing."

And with this speech came a silence.

"I don't think, somehow, that Cleve is as frank with me as he used to be. Can you imagine any reason?" said Tom, after an interval.

"*If* No, upon my word—unless you are as frank to him about his uncle as you have been with me."

"Well, I'm *not*. I never spoke to him about his uncle. But Shrapnell, who tells me all the news of Cardyllian while I'm away"—this was pointedly spoken—"said I thought he had not been down here ever since the Malory people left, and I find that he was here for a week—at least at Ware—last Autumn, for a fortnight; and he never told me, though he knew, for I said so to him, that I thought he had stayed away, and I think that was very odd."

"He may have thought that he was not bound to account to you for his time and movements," said Miss Agnes.

"Well, he *was* here; Mrs. Jones was good enough to tell me so, though other people make a secret of it; *you* saw him here, I dare say."

"Yes he *was* here, for a few days. I think in October, or the end of September."

"Oh! thank you. But as I said, I had heard that already from Mrs. Jones, who is a most inconvenient gossip upon nearly *all* subjects."

"I rather like Mrs. Jones; you mean the 'draper,' as we call her? and if Mr. Verney is not as communicative as you would have him, I really can't help it; I can only assure you for your comfort that the mysterious tenants of Malory had disappeared long before that visit."

"I know perfectly when they went away," said Sedley dryly.

Miss Agnes nodded with a scarcely perceptible smile.

"And I know—that is, I found out afterward—that he admired her, I mean the young lady—Margaret, they called her—awfully. He never let me know it himself, though. I hate fellows being so close and dark about every thing; and, in short, if people don't like to tell their—*secrets* I won't call them, for every one in Cardyllian knows all about them—I'm hanged if I ask them. All I know is, that Cleve is going to live a good deal at Ware, which means at Cardyllian, which will be a charming thing, a positive blessing, won't it? for the inhabitants and neighbors, and that I shall trouble them very little henceforward with my presence. There's Charity beckoning to me; would you mind my going to see what she wants?"

So, dismissed, away he ran like a "fielder" after a "by," as he had often run over the same ground before.

"Thomas Sedley, I want you to tell Lyster, the apothecary, to send a small bottle of *sal volatile* to Miss Christian immediately. I'd go myself—it's only round the corner—but I am afraid of the crowd. If he can give it to you now, perhaps you'd bring it, and I'll wait here."

When he brought back the phial, and Miss Charity had given it with a message at Miss Christian's trellaced door, she took Tom's arm, and said—

"She has not been looking well."

"You mean Agnes?" conjectured he.

"Yes, of course. She's not herself. She does not tell me, but I *know* the cause, and, as an old friend of ours, and a friend, besides, of Mr. Cleve Verney, I must tell you that I think he is using her *disgracefully*."

"Really?"

"Yes, *most flagitiously*."

"How do you mean? Shrapnell wrote me word that he was very attentive, and used to join her in her walks, and afterward he said that he had been mistaken, and discovered that he was awfully in love with the young lady at Malory."

"*Don't* believe a *word* of it. I wonder at Captain Shrapnell circulating such insanity. He must *know* how it really was, and it. I look upon it as *perfectly wicked*, the way that Captain Shrapnell talks. You are not to mention it, *of course*, to any one. It would be *scandalous* of you, Thomas Sedley, to *think* of breathing a *word* to *mortal—mind that*; but I'm certain you *wouldn't*."

"What a beast Cleve Verney has turned out!" exclaimed Tom Sedley. "Do you think she still cares for him?"

"Why, of course she does. If he had been paying his addresses to *me*, and that *I had* grown by his perseverance and *devotion* to like him, do you think, Thomas Sedley, that although I might give him up in consequence of his misconduct, that I could ever cease to feel the same kind of feeling about him?" And as she put this incongruous case, she held Tom Sedley's arm firmly, showing her bony wrist above her glove; and with her gaunt brown face and saucer eyes turned full upon him, rather fiercely. Tom felt an inward convulsion at the picture of Cleve's adorations at this shrine and the melting of the nymph, which by a miracle he repressed.

"But *you* may have more constancy than Agnes," he suggested.

"Don't talk like a *fool*, Thomas Sedley. *Every nice girl* is the *same*."

"May I talk to Cleve about it?"

"On *no account*. No *nice* girl could marry him *now*, and an apology would be simply *ridiculous*. I have not spoken to him on the subject, and though I had intended cutting him, my friend Mrs. Splayfoot was so clear that I should meet him just as usual, that I do control the *expression* of my feelings, and endeavor to talk to him indifferently, though I should like *uncommonly* to tell him how *odious* I shall always think him."

"Yes, I remember," said Tom, who had been pondering. "Cleve *did* tell me, that time—it's more than a year ago now—it was a year in Autumn—that he admired *Agnes*, and used to walk with you on the green every day; he *did* certainly. I must do him that justice. But suppose Agnes did not *show that she liked* him, he might not have seen any harm."

"That's the way you men always take one another's parts. I must say, I think it is *odious*,"

exclaimed Charity, with a flush in her thin cheeks, and a terrible emphasis.

"But, I say, *did* she let him see that she liked him?"

"No, of *course* she didn't. No *nice* girl *would*. But of course he *saw* it," argued Charity.

"Oh, then she *showed* it?"

"No, she did *not* show it; there was *nothing* in *any* thing she *said* or *did*, that *could* lead *any* one, by look, or word, or act, to imagine that she liked him. How *can* you be so *perverse* and *ridiculous*, Thomas Sedley, to think she'd *show* her liking? Why, even *I* don't know it. I never *saw* it. She's a *great* deal *too nice*. You don't *know* Agnes. I should not venture to *hint* at it myself. Gracious goodness! What a *fool* you are. Thomas Sedley! Hush."

The concluding caution was administered in consequence of their having got very near the seat where Agnes was sitting.

"Miss Christian is only nervous, poor old thing, and Tom Sedley has been getting *sal volatile* for her, and she'll be quite well in a day or two. Hadn't we better walk a little up and down? it's growing too cold for you to sit any longer, Agnes dear. Come."

And up got obedient Agnes, and the party of three walked up and down the green, conversing upon all sorts of subjects but the one so ably handled by Charity and Tom Sedley in their two or three minutes' private talk.

And now the noble lord and his party, and the mayor, and the corporation, and Mr. Larkin, and Captain Shrapnell, and many other celebrities, were seen slowly emerging from the lane that passes the George Inn, upon the green, and the peer having said a word or two to the mayor, and also to Lady Wimbledon, and bowed and pointed toward the jetty, the main body proceeded slowly toward that point, while Lord Verney, accompanied by Cleve, walked grandly toward the young ladies who were to be presented.

Tom Sedley, observing this movement, took his leave hastily, and in rather a marked way walked off at right angles with Lord Verney's line of march, twirling his cane.

CHAPTER XLIV.

VANE ETHERAGE GREETS LORD VERNEY.

So the great Lord Verney, with the flush of his brilliant successes in the town-hall still upon his thin cheeks, and a countenance dry and solemn, to which smiling came not easily, made the acquaintance of the Miss Etherages, and observed that the younger was "sweetly pretty, about it, and her elder sister appeared to him a particularly sensible young woman, and was, he understood, very useful in the charities, and things." And he repeated to them, in his formal way, his hope of seeing them at Ware, and was gracious as such a man can be, and instead of attorneys and writs sent grouse and grapes to Hazelden.

And thus this narrow man, who did not easily forgive, expanded and forgave, and the secret of the subsidence of the quarrel, and of the Christian solution of the "difficulty," was simply Mr. Vane Etherage's hundred and thirty votes in the county.

What a blessing to these countries is representative government, with its attendant institution of the canvass! It is the one galvanism which no material can resist. It melts every heart, and makes the coldest, hardest, heaviest metals burst into beautiful flame. Granted that at starting, the geniality, repentance, kindness, are so many arrant hypocrisies; yet who can tell whether these repentances, in white sheets, taper in hand, these offerings of birds and fruits, these smiles and compliments, and "Christian courtesies," may not end in improving the man who is compelled to act like a good fellow and accept his kindly canons, and improve *him* also with whom these better relations are established? As muscle is added to the limb, so strength is added to the particular moral quality we exercise, and kindness is elicited, and men perhaps end by having some of the attributes which they began by affecting. At all events, any recognition of the kindly and peaceable social philosophy of Christainity is, so far as it goes, good.

"What a sensible, nice, hospitable old man Lord Verney is; I think him *the* most sensible and the *nicest man* I *ever* met," said Miss Charity, in an enthusiasm which was quite genuine, for she was, honestly, no respecter of persons. "And young Mr. Verney certainly looked very handsome, but I don't like him."

"Don't like him! *Why?*" said Agnes, looking up.

"Because I think him perfectly *odious*," replied Miss Charity.

Agnes was inured to Miss Charity's adjectives, and even the fierce flush that accompanied some of them failed to alarm her.

"Well, I rather like him," she said, quietly.

"You *can't* like him, Agnes. It is not a matter of opinion at all; it's just simply a matter of *fact*—and you *know* that he is a most *worldly*, *selfish*, *cruel*, and, *I* think, *wicked* young man, and you need not talk about him, for he's *odious*. And here comes Thomas Sedley again."

Agnes smiled a faint and bitter smile.

"And what do you think of *him?*" she asked.

"Thomas Sedley? Of course I like him; we all like him. Don't you?" answered Charity.

"Yes, pretty well—very well. I suppose he has faults, like other people. He's good-humored, selfish, of course—I fancy they all are. And papa likes him, I think; but really, Charrie, if you want to know, I don't care if I never saw him again."

"Hush!"

"*Well!* You've got rid of the Verneys, and here I am again," said Tom, approaching. "They are going up to Hazelden to see your father."

And so they were—up that pretty walk that

passes the mills and ascends steeply by the precipitous side of the wooded glen, so steep, that in two places you have to mount by rude flights of steps—a most sequestered glen, and utterly silent, except for the sound of the mill-stream tinkling and crooning through the rocks below, unseen through the dense boughs and stems of the wood beneath.

If Lord Verney in his conciliatory condescension was grand, so was Vane Etherage on the occasion of receiving and forgiving him at Hazelden. He had considered and constructed a little speech, with some pomp of language, florid and magnanimous. He had sat in his bath-chair for half an hour at the little iron gate of the flower-garden of Hazelden, no inmate of which had ever seen him look, for a continuance, so sublimely important, and indeed solemn, as he had done all that morning.

Vane Etherage had made his arrangements to receive Lord Verney with a dignified deference. He was to be wheeled down the incline about 200 yards, to "the bower," to meet the peer at that point, and two lusty fellows were to push him up by Lord Verney's side to the house, where wine and other comforts awaited him.

John Evans had been placed at the mill to signal to the people above at Hazelden by a musket-shot the arrival of Lord Verney at that stage of his progress. The flag-staff and rigging on the green platform at Hazelden were fluttering all over with all the flags that ever were invented, in honor of the gala.

Lord Verney ascended, leaning upon the arm of his nephew, with Mr. Larkin and the major for supporters, Captain Shrapnell, Doctor Lyster, and two or three other distinguished inhabitants of Cardyllian bringing up the rear.

Lord Verney carried his head high, and grew reserved and rather silent as they got on, and as they passed under the solemn shadow of the great trees by the mill, an overloaded musket went off with a sound like a cannon, as Lord Verney afterward protested, close to the unsuspecting party, and a loud and long whoop from John Evans completed the concerted signal. .

The viscount actually jumped, and Cleve felt the shock of his arm against his side.

"D— you, John Evans, what the *devil* are you *doing?*" exclaimed Captain Shrapnell, who, turning from white to crimson, was the first of the party to recover his voice.

"Yes, sir, thank you—very good," said Evans, touching his hat, and smiling incessantly with the incoherent volubility of Welsh politeness. "A little bit of a squib, sir, if you please, for Captain Squire Etherage—very well, I thank you—to let him know Lord Verney—very much obliged, sir—was at the mill—how do you do, sir?—and going up to Hazelden, if you please, sir."

And the speech subsided in a little gratified laugh of delighted politeness.

"You'd better not do that *again*, though," said the captain, with a menacing wag of his head; and availing himself promptly of the opportunity of improving his relations with Lord Verney, he placed himself by his side, and assured him that though he was an old campaigner, and had smelled powder in all parts of the world, he had never heard such a report from a musket in all his travels and adventures before; and hoped Lord Verney's hearing was not the worse of it. He had known a general officer deafened by a shot, and, by Jove, his own ears were singing with it still, accustomed as he was, by Jupiter, to such things.

His lordship, doing his best on the festive occasion, smiled uncomfortably, and said—

"Yes—thanks—ha, ha! I really thought it was a cannon—about it."

And Shrapnell called back and said—

"Don't you be coming on with that thing, John Evans—do you mind?—Lord Verney's had quite enough of that."

"You'll excuse me, Lord Verney, I thought you'd wish so much said," and Lord Verney bowed graciously.

The answering shot and cheer which were heard from above announced to John Evans that the explosion had been heard at Hazelden, and still smiling and touching his hat, he continued his voluble civilities—"Very good, sir, very much obliged, sir, very well, I thank you; I hope you are very well, sir, very good indeed, sir," and so forth, till they were out of hearing.

The shot, indeed, was distinctly heard at the gay flag-staff up at Hazelden, and the admiral got under weigh, and proceeded down the incline charmingly till they had nearly reached the little platform at the bower, where, like Christian in his progress, he was to make a halt.

But his plans at this point were disturbed. Hardly twenty yards before they reached it, one of his men let go, the drag upon the other suddenly increased, and resulted in a pull, which caused him to trip, and as men tripping while in motion down-hill will, he butted forward, charging headlong, and finally tumbling on his face, he gave to the rotary throne of Mr. Etherage such an impulse as carried him quite past the arbor, and launched him upon the steep descent of the gravel walk with a speed every moment accelerated.

"Stop her! — ease her! — d— you, Williams!" roared the admiral, little knowing how idle were his orders. The bath-chair had taken head, the pace became furious; the running footmen gave up pursuit in despair, and Mr. Vane Etherage was obliged to concentrate his severest attention, as he never did before, on the task of guiding his flying vehicle, a feat which was happily favored by the fact that the declivity presented no short turns.

The sounds were heard below—a strange ring of wheels, and a powerful voice bawling, "Ease her! stop her!" and some stronger expressions.

"Can't be a carriage, about it, *here?*" exclaimed Lord Verney, halting abruptly, and

only restrained from skipping upon the side bank by a sense of dignity.

"Never mind, Lord Verney, don't mind, I'll take care of you, I'm your van-guard," exclaimed Captain Shrapnell, with a dare-devil gayety, inspired by the certainty that it could not be a carriage, and the conviction that the adventure would prove nothing more than some children and nursery-maids playing with a perambulator.

His feelings underwent a revulsion, however, when old Vane Etherage, enveloped in cloaks and shawls, his hat gone, and his long grizzled hair streaming backward, with a wild countenance, and both hands working the directing handle, came swooping into sight, roaring maniacally, "Ease her! back her!" and yawning frightfully in his descent upon them.

Captain Shrapnell, they say, turned pale at the spectacle, but he felt he must now go through with it, or forever sacrifice that castle in the air, of which the events of the day had suggested the ground-plan and elevation.

"Good heaven! he'll be killed, about it!" exclaimed Lord Verney, peeping from behind a tree, with unusual energy; but whether he meant Shrapnell or Etherage, or both, I don't know, and nobody in that moment of sincerity minded much what he meant. I dare say a front-rank man in a square at Waterloo did not feel before the gallop of the Cuirassiers as the gallant captain did before the charge of the large invalid who was descending upon him. All he meditated was a decent show of resistance, and as he had a stout walking-stick in his hand, something might be done without risking his bones. So, as the old gentleman thundered downward, roaring "Keep her off—keep her clear," Shrapnell, roaring "I'm your man!" nervously popped the end of his stick under the front wheel of the vehicle, himself skipping to one side, unhappily the wrong one, for the chair at this check spun round, and the next spectacle was, Mr. Vane Etherage and Captain Shrapnell, enveloped in cloaks and mufflers, and rolling over and over in one another's arms, like athletes in mortal combat, the captain's fist being visible, as they rolled round, at Mr. Vane Etherage's back, with his walking-stick still clutched in it.

The chair was lying on its side, the gentlemen were separated, Captain Shrapnell jumped to his feet.

"Well, Lord Verney, I believe I did something there!" said the gallant captain with the air of a man who has done his duty and knows it.

"Done something! you've broke my neck, you lubber!" panted Mr. Vane Etherage, who, his legs not being available, had been placed sitting, with some cloaks about him, on the bank.

Shrapnell grinned and winked expressively, and confidentially whispered, "Jolly old fellow he is—no one minds the admiral; we let him talk."

"Lord Verney," said his lordship, introducing himself with a look and air of polite concern.

"No, my name's Etherage," said the invalid, mistaking—he fancied that Jos. Larkin, who was expounding his views of the accident grandly to Cleve Verney in the background, could not be less than a peer—"I live up there, at Hazelden—devilish near being *killed here*, by that lubber there. Why, I was running at the rate of five-and-twenty knots an hour, if I was making *one;* and I remember it right well, sir, there's a check down there, just before you come to the mill-stile, and the wall there; and I'd have run my bows right into it, and not a bit the worse, sir, if that d— fellow had just kept out of the—the—king's course, you know; and egad, I don't know now how it is—I suppose I'm smashed, sir."

"I hope not, sir. I am Lord Verney—about it; and it would pain me extremely to learn that any serious injuries, or—or—things—had been sustained, about it."

"I'll tell that in a moment," said Doctor Lyster, who was of the party, briskly.

So after a variety of twists and wrenches and pokes, Vane Etherage was pronounced sound and safe.

"I don't know how the devil I escaped!" exclaimed the invalid.

"By tumbling on *me*—very simply," replied Captain Shrapnell with a spirited laugh.

"You may set your mind at rest, Shrapnell," said the doctor, walking up to him, with a congratulatory air. "He's all right, this time; but you had better not mind giving the old fellow any more rolls of that sort—the pitcher to the well, you know—and the next time might smash him."

"I'm more concerned about smashing myself, thank you. The next time he may roll to the devil—and through whoever he pleases for me—knocked down with that blackguard old chair, and that great hulking fellow on top of me—all for trying to be of use, egad, when every one of you funked it—and not a soul asks about *my* bones, egad, or my neck either."

"Oh! come, Shrapnell, you're not setting up for an old dog yet. There's a difference between you and Etherage," said the doctor.

"I hope so," answered the captain sarcastically, "but civility is civility all the world over; and I can tell you, another fellow would make fuss enough about the pain I'm suffering."

It was found, farther, that one wheel of the bath-chair was disorganized, and the smith must come from the town to get it to rights, and that Vane Etherage, who could as soon have walked up a rainbow as up the acclivity to Hazelden, must bivouac for a while where he sat.

So there the visit was paid, and the exciting gala of that day closed, and the viscount and his party marched down, with many friends attendant, to the jetty, and embarked in the yacht for Ware.

CHAPTER XLV.

REBECCA MERVYN READS HER LETTER.

THE evenings being short, the shops alight, and the good people of Cardyllian in their houses, Tom Sedley found the hour before dinner hang heavily on his hands. So he walked slowly up Castle Street, and saw Mr. Robson, the worthy post-master, standing, with his hands in his pockets, at the open door.

"No letter for me, I dare say?" asked Sedley.

"No, sir—nothing."

"I don't know how to kill the time. I wish my dinner was ready. You dined, like a wise man, at one o'clock, I dare say?"

"We do—we dine early here, sir."

"I know it; a capital plan. I do it myself, whenever I make any stay here."

"And you can eat a bit o' something hearty at tea then."

"To be sure; that's the good of it. I don't know what to do with myself. I'll take a walk round by Malory. Can I leave the Malory letters for you?"

"You're only joking, sir."

"I was not, upon my honor. I'd be glad to bolt your shutters, or to twig your steps—any thing to do. I literally don't know what to do with myself."

"There's no family at Malory, you know, now, sir."

"Oh! I did not know; I knew the other family had gone. No letters to be delivered then?"

"Well, sir, there *is*—but you're only joking?"

"What is it?"

"A letter to Mrs. Rebecca Mervyn—but I would not think of troubling a gentleman with it."

"Old Rebecca; why I made her acquaintance among the shingles and cockles on the sea-shore last year—a charming old sea-nymph, or whatever you call it!"

"We all have a great respect for Mrs. Mervyn, down here, in Cardyllian. The family has a great opinion of her, and they think a great deal of her, like us," said Mr. Robson, who did not care to hear any mysterious names applied to her without a protest.

"Well—so I say—so have I. I'll give her the letter, and take a receipt," said Sedley, extending his hand.

"There really *is* a receipt, sir, wanting," said the official, amused. "It came this morning—and if you'll come in—if it isn't too much trouble—I'll show it to you, please, sir."

In he stepped to the post-office, where Mr. Robson showed him a letter which he had that afternoon received. It said—

"SIR:—I enclose five shillings, represented by postage-stamps, which will enable you to pay a messenger on whom you can depend, to deliver a letter which I place along with this in the post-office, into the hand of Mrs. Mervyn, Steward's House, Malory, Cardyllian, to whom it is addressed, and which is marked with the letter D at the left hand corner. I am, sir, your obt. servant, J. DINGWELL."

"The letter is come," said Mr. Robson, taking it out of a pigeon-hole in a drawer, and thumbing it, and smiling on it with a gentle curiosity.

"Yes—that's it," said Tom Sedley, also reading the address. "'Mrs. Mervyn'—what a queer old ghost of a lady she is!—'Malory,' that's the ground—and the letter D in the corner. Well, I'm quite serious. I'll take the letter with pleasure, and see the old woman, and put it into her hand. I'm not joking, and I shall be back again, in a hour, I dare say, and I'll tell you what she says, and how she looks—that is, assuming it is a love-letter."

"Well, sir, as you wish it; and it's very kind of you, and the old lady must sign a receipt, for the letter's registered—but it's too much trouble for you, sir, isn't it really?"

"Nonsense; give me the letter. If you won't, I can't help it."

"And this receipt should be signed."

"And the receipt also."

So away went our friend, duly furnished, and marched over the hill we know so well, that overhangs the sea, and down by the narrow old road to Malory, thinking of many things.

The phantom of the beautiful lady of Malory was very much faded now. Even as he looked down on the old house and woodlands, the romance came not again. It was just a remembered folly, like others, and excited or pained him little more. But a new trouble vexed him. How many of our blessings do we take for granted, enjoy thanklessly, like our sight, our hearing, our health, and only appreciate when they are either withdrawn or in danger!

Captain Shrapnell had written among his gossip some jocular tattle about Cleve's devotion to Miss Agnes Etherage, which had moved him oddly and uncomfortably; but the next letter disclosed the mystery of Cleve's clandestine visits to Malory, and turned his thoughts into a new channel.

But here was all revived, and worse. Charity, watching with a woman's eyes, and her opportunities, had made to him a confidence about which there could be no mistake; and then Agnes was so changed—not a bit glad to see him. And did not she look pretty? Was there not a slight look of pride—a reserve—that was new—a little sadness—along with the heightened beauty of her face and figure? How on earth had he been so stupid as not to perceive how beautiful she was all this time? Cleve had more sense. By Jove, she was the prettiest girl in England, and that selfish fellow had laid himself out to make her fond of him, and, having succeeded, jilted her. And now she would not care for any one but him.

There was a time, he thought, when he, Tom Sedley, might have made her like him. What a fool he was! And that was past—unimproved—irrevocable—and now she never could. Girls

may affect those second likings, he thought, but they never really care after the first. It is pride, or pique, or friendship, or convenience—any thing but love.

Love! And what had he to do with love? Who would marry him on four hundred a year, and no expectations? And now he was going to tease himself because he had not stepped in before Cleve Verney and secured the affections of little Agnes. What a fool he was! What business had he dreaming such dreams? He had got on very well without falling in love with Agnes. Why should he begin now? If he found *that* folly gaining upon him, he would leave Cardyllian without staying his accustomed week, and never return till the feeling had died as completely as last year's roses.

Down the hill he marched in his new romance, as he had done more than a year ago, over the same ground, in his old one, when in the moonlight, on the shingle, he had met the same old lady of whom he was now in quest.

The old trees of Malory rose up before him, dark and silent, higher and higher as he approached. It was a black night—no moon; even the stars obscured by black lines of cloud as he pushed open the gate, and entered the deeper darkness of the curving carriage-road that leads up through the trees.

It was six o'clock now, and awfully dark. When he reached the open space before the hall door, he looked up at the dim front of the house, but no light glimmered there. The deep-mouthed dog in the stable-yard was yelling his challenge, and he farther startled the solitary woods by repeated double-knocks that boomed through the empty hall and chambers of the deserted house.

Despairing of an entrance at last, and not knowing which way to turn, he took the way by chance which led him to the front of the steward's house, from the diamond casement of which a light was shining. The door lay open; only the latch was closed, such being the primitive security that prevails in that region of poverty and quietude.

With his stick he knocked a little tattoo, and a candle was held over the clumsy banister, and the little servant girl inquired in her clear Welsh accent what he wanted.

So, preliminaries over, he mounted to that chamber in which Mr. Levi had been admitted to a conference among the delft and porcelain, stags, birds, officers, and huntsmen, who, in gay tints and old-fashioned style, occupied every coigne of vantage, and especially that central dresser, which mounted nearly to the beams of the ceiling.

The room is not large, the recesses are deep, the timber-work is of clumsy oak, and the decorations of old-world tea-pots, jugs, and beasts of the field, and cocked-hatted gentlemen in gorgeous coloring and gilding, so very gay and splendid, reflecting the candle-light, and the wavering glare of the fire from a thousand curves and angles, and the old shining furniture and carved oak clock; the room itself and all its properties so perfectly neat and tidy, not one grain of dust or single cobweb to be seen in any nook or crevice, that Tom Sedley was delighted with the scene.

What a delightful retreat, he thought, from the comfortless affectations of the world. Here was the ideal of snugness, and of brightness and warmth. It amounted to a kind of beauty that absolutely fascinated him. He looked kindly on the old lady who had laid down her knitting, and looked at him through a pair of round spectacles, and thought that he would like to adopt her for his housekeeper, and live a solitary life of lonely rabbit-shooting in Penruthyn Park, trout-fishing in the stream, and cruising in an imaginary yacht on the estuary and the contiguous sea-board.

This little plan, or rather vision, pictured itself to Tom Sedley's morbid and morose imagination as the most endurable form of life to which he could now aspire.

The old lady, meanwhile, was looking at him with an expression of wonder and anxiety, and he said—

"I hope, Mrs. Mervyn, I have not disturbed you much. It is not quite so late as it looks, and as the post-master, Mr. Robson, could not find a messenger, and I was going this way, I undertook to call and give you the letter, having once had the pleasure of making your acquaintance, although you do not, I'm afraid, recollect me."

"I knew it, the moment his face entered the room. It was the same face," she repeated, as if she had seen a picture, not a face.

"Just under the walls of Malory; you were anxious to learn whether a sail was in sight, in the direction of Pendillion," said he, suggesting.

"No, there was none; it was not there. People—other people—would have tired of watching long ago; my old eyes never dazzled, sir. And *he* came, so like, he came. I thought it was a spirit from the sea; and here he is. There's something in your voice, sir, and your face. It is wonderful; but not a Verney—no, you told me so. They are cruel men—one way or other they were all cruel, but some more than others—my God! much more. There's something in the eyes—the setting, the light—it can't be mistaken; something in the curve of the chin, very pretty—but you're no Verney, you told me—and see how he comes here a second time, smiling—and yet when he goes, it is like waking from a dream where they were, as they all used to look, long ago; and there's a pain at my heart, for weeks after. It never can be again, sir; I'm growing old. If it ever comes, it will find me so changed—or dead, I sometimes begin to think, and try to make up my mind. There's a good world, you know, where we'll all meet and be happy, no more parting or dying, sir. Yet I'd like to see him even once, here, just as he was, a beautiful mortal; and sometimes, sir, I despair; though I

know, I know I *ought not*—God is so good; and while there's life there is hope."

"Certainly, hope, there's always hope; every one has something to vex them. *I* have, I know, Mrs. Mervyn; and I was just thinking what a charming drawing-room this is, and how delightful it must be, the quiet and comfort, and glow of such a room. There is no drawing-room on earth I should like so well," said good-natured Tom Sedley, whose sympathies were easy, and who liked saying a pleasant thing when he could. "And this is the letter, and here is a printed receipt, which, when you have been so kind as to sign it, I've promised to give to my friend, Mr. Robson of the post-office."

"Thank you, sir; this is registered, they call it. I had one a long time ago, with the same kind of green ribbon round it. Won't you sit down while I sign this?"

"Many thanks," said Sedley, sitting down gravely at the table, and looking so thoughtful, and somehow so much at home, that you might have fancied his dream of living in the steward's house had long been accomplished,

"I'd rather not get a letter, sir; I don't know the handwriting of this address, and a letter can but bring me sorrow. There is but one welcome chance which could befall me, and that I hope *may* come yet, just a *hope*, sir. Sometimes it brightens up, but it has been low all today."

"Sorry you have been out of spirits, Mrs. Mervyn, I know what it is; I've been so myself, and I *am* so, rather, just now," said Tom, who was, in this homely seclusion, tending toward confidence.

"There are now but two handwritings that I should know; one is his, the other Lady Verney's; all the rest are dead; and this is neither."

"Well, Mrs. Mervyn, if it does not come from either of the persons you care for, it yet may tell you news of them," remarked Tom Sedley, sagely.

"Hardly, sir. I hear every three months from Lady Verney. I heard on Tuesday last. Thank God, she's well. No, it's nothing concerning her, and I think it may be something bad. I am afraid of this letter."

"I know the feeling, Mrs. Mervyn; I've had it myself, when duns were troublesome. But you have nothing of the kind in this happy retreat; which I really do envy you from my heart.

"Envy nothing. Happy retreat! Little you know, sir. I have been for weeks and months at a time half wild with anguish, dreaming of the sea. How can he know?"

"Very true, I can't know; I only speak of it as it strikes me at the moment. I fancy I should so like to live here, like a hermit, quite out of the persecutions of luck and the nonsense of the world."

"You are wonderfully like at times, sir—it is beautiful, it is frightful—when I moved the candle then—"

"I'll sit any way you like best, Mrs. Mervyn, with pleasure, and you can move the candle, and try if it can amuse—no, I mean interest you."

If some of his town friends could have peeped in through a key-hole, and seen Tom Sedley and old Rebecca Mervyn seated at opposite sides of the table, in this very queer old room, so like Darby and Joan, it would have made matter for a comical story.

"Like a flash it comes!"

Tom Sedley looked at the wild, large eyes that were watching him—the round spectacles now removed—across the table, and could not help smiling.

"Yes, the *smile*—it *is* the smile! You told me, sir, your name was Sedley, not Verney."

"My name is Thomas Sedley. My father was Captain Sedley, and served through a part of the Peninsular campaign. He was not twenty at the battle of Vittoria, and he was at Waterloo. My mother died a few months after I was born."

"Was *she* a Verney?"

"No; she was distantly connected, but her name was Melville," said he.

"Connected. That accounts for it, perhaps."

"Very likely."

"And your father—dead?" she said, sadly.

"Yes; twenty years ago."

"Was he related, sir, to the Verneys?"

"No, they were friends. He managed two of the estates after he left the army, and very well, I'm told."

"Sedley—Thomas Sedley—I remember the name. We did not know the name of Sedley—except on one occasion—I was sent for, but it came to nothing. But I lived so much in the dark about things," and she sighed.

"I forgot, Mrs. Mervyn, how late it it growing, and how much too long I have stayed here admiring your pretty room, and I fear interrupting you," said Tom, suddenly remembering his dinner, and standing up—"If you kindly give me the receipt, I'll leave it on my way back."

Mrs. Mervyn had clipped the silken cord, and was now reading the letter, and he might as well have addressed his little speech to the china shepherdess, with the straw disk and ribbons on her head, in the bodice and short petticoat of flowered brocade, leaning against a tree, with a lamb with its hind leg and tail broken off, looking affectionately in her face.

"I can't make it out, sir; your eyes are young—perhaps you would read it to me—it's not very long."

"Certainly, with pleasure"—and Tom Sedley sat down, and, spreading the letter on the table, under the candles, read as follows to the old lady opposite:

"PRIVATE.

"MADAM:—As an old and intimate friend of your reputed husband, I take leave to inform you that he placed a sum of money in my hands for the use of your son and his, if he be

till living. Should he be so, will you be so ood as to let me know where it will reach him. A line to Jos. Larkin, Esq., at the Verney Arms, Cardyllian, or a verbal message, if you lesire to see him, will suffice. Mr. Larkin is he solvent and religious attorney of the present Lord Verney, and you have my consent to advise with him on the subject.

"I have the honor to be, madam, your obelient servant, J. DINGWELL."

"P.S.—You are aware, I suppose, madam, hat I am the witness who proved the death of he late Hon. Arthur Verney, who died of a ow fever in Constantinople, in July twelve nonths."

"*Died!* My God! Died! did you say *died?*"

"Yes. I thought you knew. It was proved a year ago nearly. The elder brother of the present Lord Verney."

There followed a silence while you might count ten, and then came a long, wild, and bitter cry.

The little girl started up, with white lips, and said, "Lord bless us!" The sparrows in the ivy about the windows fluttered—even Tom Sedley was chilled and pierced by that desolate scream.

"I'm very sorry, really, I'm awfully sorry," Tom exclaimed, finding himself, he knew not how, again on his feet, and gazing at the white, imploring face of the trembling old woman. "I really did not know—I had not an idea you felt such an interest in any of the family. If I had known, I should have been more careful. I'm shocked at what I've done."

"Oh! Arthur—oh! Arthur. He's gone—*after all*, after *all*—my darling will never come again—I waiting my whole life away, watching and hoping for you, my darling," she sobbed wildly. "If we could have only met for a minute, just that I might tell you—but, oh! you can't hear, you'll never know." She was drawing back the window-curtain, looking toward the dark Pendillion and the starless sea—"He was beautiful, my darling, away by Pendillion. I watched his sail till it was out of sight—watching in the window, till it was quite out of sight—crying alone, till it grew dark. He thought he'd come again—he went smiling—and my heart misgave me. I said that day, crying alone, he'll never come again. I'm never to see my beautiful Arthur any more—never—never—never. Oh, darling, darling, so far away. If I could even see his grave."

"I'm awfully sorry, ma'am; I wish I could be of any use," said honest Tom Sedley, speaking very low and kindly, standing beside her, with, I think, tears in his eyes. "I wish so much, ma'am, you could employ me any way. I'd be so glad to be of any use, about your son, or to see that Mr. Larkin. I don't like his face, ma'am, and would not advise your trusting him too much."

"The little child's dead, sir. It was a beautiful little thing; when it was ten weeks and two days old it died, the darling, and I have no one now."

"I'll come to you and see you in the morning," said Tom.

And he walked home in the dark, and stopped on the summit of the hill, looking down upon the twinkling lights of the town, and back again toward solemn Malory, thinking of what he had seen, and what an odd world it was.

CHAPTER XLVI.

BY RAIL TO LONDON.

ABOUT an hour later, Tom Sedley, in solitude, meditated thus—

"I wonder whether the Etherages"—(meaning pretty Miss Agnes)—"would think it a bore if I went up to see them. It's too late for tea. I'm afraid they mightn't like it. No one, of course, like Cleve now. They'd find me very dull, I dare say. I don't care, I'll walk up, and if I see the lights in the drawing-room windows, I'll try."

He did walk up; he did see the lights in the drawing-room windows; and he did try, with the result of finding himself upon the drawing-room carpet a minute after, standing at the side of Agnes, and chatting to Miss Charity.

"How is your father?" asked Tom, seeing the study untenanted.

"Not at *all* well, *I* think; he had an accident to-day. Didn't you hear?"

"*Accident!* No, I didn't."

"Oh! yes. Somehow, when Lord Verney and the other people were coming up here to-day, he was going to meet them, and among them they overturned his bath-chair, and I don't know really who's to blame. Captain Shrapnell says he saved his life; but, however it happened, he was upset and very much shaken. I see you laughing, Thomas Sedley! What on earth *can* you see in it to laugh at? It's so exactly like Agnes—she *laughed!* you did, *indeed*, Agnes, and if I had not seen it, with my *own eyes*, I *could* not have *believed* it?"

"I knew papa was not hurt, and I could not help laughing, if you put me to death for it, and they say he drove over Lord Verney's foot."

"That would not break my heart," said Sedley. "Did you hear the particulars from Cleve?"

"No, I did not see Mr. Verney to speak to, since the accident," said Miss Charity. "By the bye, who was the tall, good-looking girl, in the seal-skin coat, he was talking to all the way to the jetty? I think she was Lady Wimbledon's daughter."

"So she was; has she rather large blue eyes?"

"Yes."

"Oh! it must be she; that's Miss Caroline Oldys. She's such a joke; she's elder than Cleve."

"Oh! that's impossible; she's decidedly younger than Mr. Cleve Verney, and, I think, extremely pretty."

"Well, perhaps she *is* younger, and I *do* believe she's pretty; but she's a fool, and she has been awfully in love with him for I don't know how many years—every one was laughing at it, two or three seasons ago; she *is* such a muff!"

"What *do* you mean by a muff?" demanded Charity.

"Well, a goose, then. Lord Verney's her guardian or trustee, or something; and they say, that he and Lady Wimbledon had agreed to promote the affair. Just like them. She is such a scheming old woman; and Lord Verney is such a—I was going to say, such a *muff*—but he is such a *spoon*. Cleve's wide awake, though, and I don't think he'll do *that* for them."

I believe there may have been, at one time, some little foundation in fact for the theory which supposed the higher powers favorable to such a consummation. But time tests the value of such schemes, and it would seem that Lady Wimbledon had come to the conclusion that the speculation was a barren one: for, this night, in her dressing-gown, with her wig off, and a silken swathing about her bald head, she paid a very exciting visit to her daughter's room, and blew her up in her own awful way, looking like an angry Turk. "She wondered how any person with Caroline's *experience* could be such an *idiot* as to let that young man go on making a fool of her. He had no other idea but the one of making a *fool* of her before the world. She, Lady Wimbledon, would have no more of any such insensate folly—her prospects should not be ruined, if she could prevent it, and prevent it she *could* and *would*—there should be an end of that odious nonsense; and if she chose to make herself the laughing-stock of the world, she, Lady Wimbledon, would do her duty and take her down to Slominton, where they would be quiet enough at all events; and Cleve Verney, she ventured to say, with a laugh, would not follow her."

The young lady was in tears, and blubbered in her romantic indignation till her eyes and nose were inflamed, and her mamma requested her to look in the glass, and see what a figure she had made of herself, and made her bathe her face for an hour, before she went to bed.

There was no other young lady at Ware, and Cleve smiled in his own face, in his looking-glass, as he dressed for dinner.

"My uncle will lose no time—I did not intend this; but I see very well what he means, he'll be disappointed and grow suspicious, if I draw back; and she has really nothing to recommend her, poor Caroline, and he'll find that out time enough, and meanwhile I shall get over some months quietly."

There was no great difficulty in seeing, indeed, that the noble host distinguished Lady Wimbledon and her daughter. And Lord Verney, leaning on Cleve's arm, asked him lightly what he thought of Miss Caroline Oldys; and Cleve, who had the gift of presence of mind, rather praised the young lady.

"My uncle would prefer Ethel, when he sees a hope in that direction, I shan't hear much more of Caroline, and so on—and we shall be growing older—and the chapter of accidents—and all that."

For a day or two Lord Verney was very encouraging, and quite took an interest in the young lady, and showed her the house and the place, and unfolded all the plans which were about to grow into realities, and got Cleve to pull her across the lake, and walked round to meet them, and amused the young man by contriving that little opportunity. But Lady Wimbledon revealed something to Lord Verney, that evening, over their game of *ecarté*, which affected his views.

Cleve was talking to the young lady, but he saw Lord Verney look once or twice, in the midst of a very serious conversation with Lady Wimbledon, at Caroline Oldys and himself, and now without smiling.

It was Lady Wimbledon's deal, but she did not deal, and her opponent seemed also to have forgotten the cards, and their heads inclined once toward the other as the talk proceeded.

It was about the hour when ladies light their bedroom candles, and ascend. And Lady Wimbledon and Caroline Oldys had vanished in a few minutes more, and Cleve thought, "She has told him something that has given him a new idea." His uncle was rather silent and dry for the rest of that evening, but next morning seemed pretty much as usual, only Lord Verney took an opportunity of saying to him—

"I have been considering, and I have heard things, and, with reference to the subject of my conversation with you, in town, I think you ought to direct your thoughts to *Ethel*, about it—you ought to have money—don't you see? It's very important—money—very well to be *fils de ses œuvres*, and that kind of thing; but a little money does no harm; on the contrary, it is very desirable. Other people keep that point in view; I don't see why we should not. I ask myself this question—How is it that people get on in the world? And I answer—in great measure by amassing money; and arguing from *that*, I think it desirable you should have some money to begin with, and I've endeavored to put it logically, about it, that you may see the drift of what I say." And he made an excuse and sent Cleve up to town next day before him.

I have been led into an episode by Miss Charity's question about Miss Caroline Oldys: and returning to Hazelden, I find Tom Sedley taking his leave of the young ladies for the night, and setting out for the Verney Arms with a cigar between his lips.

Next morning he walked down to Malory again, and saw old Rebecca, who seemed, in her odd way, comforted on seeing him, but spoke little—almost nothing, and he charged her to tell neither Dingwell, of whom he had heard

nothing but evil, nor Jos. Larkin, of whom he had intuitively a profound suspicion—any thing about her own history, or the fate of her child, but to observe the most cautious reserve in any communications they might seek to open with her. And having delivered this injunction in a great variety of language, he took his leave, and got home very early to his breakfast, and ran up to London, oddly enough, in the same carriage with Cleve Verney.

Tom Sedley was angry with Cleve, I am afraid not upon any very high principle. If Cleve had trifled with the affections of Miss Caroline Oldys, I fear he would have borne the spectacle of her woes with considerable patience. But if the truth must be told, honest Tom Sedley was leaving Cardyllian in a pet. Anger, grief, jealousy, were seething in his good-natured heart. Agnes Etherage—*his* little Agnes—she had belonged to him as long as he could remember; she was gone, and he never knew how much he liked her until he had lost her.

Gone? No; in his wanton cruelty this handsome outlaw had *slain* his pet deer—had *shot* his sweet bird dead, and there she lay in the sylvan solitude she had so beautified—*dead;* and he—heartless archer—went on his way smiling, having darkened the world for harmless Tom Sedley. Could he like him ever again?

Well, the world brooks no heroics now; there are reserves. Men cultivate a thick skin—nature's buff-coat—in which, with little pain and small loss of blood, the modern man-at-arms rides cheerily through life's battle. When point or edge happen to go a little through, as I have said, there are reserves. There is no good in roaring, grinning, or cursing. The scatheless only laugh at you; therefore wipe away the blood quietly, and seem all you can like the rest. Better not to let them see even *that*. Is there not sometimes more of curiosity than of sympathy in the scrutiny? Don't you even see, at times, just the suspicion of a smile on your friend's face, as he prescribes wet brown paper or basilicon on a cobweb, according to his skill?

So Tom and Cleve talked a little—an acquaintance would have said, just as usual—and exchanged newspapers, and even laughed a little now and then; but when at Shillingsworth the last interloper got out, and Tom and Cleve were left to themselves, the ruling idea asserted itself, and Sedley looked luridly out of the window, and grew silent for a time, and pretended not to hear Cleve when he asked him whether he had seen the report of Lord Verney's visit to Cardyllian, as displayed in the county paper of that day, which served to amuse him extremely.

"I don't think," said Tom Sedley at last, abruptly, "that nice, pretty little creature, Agnes Etherage—the nicest little thing, by Jove, I think I ever saw—I say she is not looking well."

"Is not she really?" said Cleve, very coolly, cutting open a leaf in his magazine.

"Didn't you observe?" exclaimed Tom, rather fiercely.

"Well, no, I can't say I did; but you know them so much better than I," answered Cleve; "it can't be very much; I dare say she's well by this time."

"How *can* you speak that way, Verney, knowing all you do?"

"Why, *what* do I know?" exclaimed Cleve, looking up in unaffected wonder.

"You know all about it; *why* she's out of spirits, *why* she's looking so delicate, *why* she's not like herself," said Tom, impatiently.

"Upon my soul I do *not*," said Cleve Verney, with animation.

"That's odd, considering you've half broken her heart," urged Tom.

"I broken her heart?" repeated Cleve. "Now, really, Sedley, do pray think what you're saying."

"I say I think you've broken her heart, and her sister thinks so too; and it's an awful shame," insisted Tom, very grimly.

"I really do think the people want to set me mad," said Cleve, testily. "If any one says that I have ever done any thing that could have made any of that family, who are in their senses, fancy that I was in love with Miss Agnes Etherage, and that I wished her to suppose so, it is simply an *untruth*. I never did, and I don't intend; and I can't see, for the life of me, Tom Sedley, what business it is of yours. But thus much I do say, upon my honor, it is a lie. Miss Charity Etherage, an old maid, with no more sense than a snipe, living in that barbarous desert, where if a man appears at all during eight months out of the twelve, he's a prodigy, and if he walks up the street with a Cardyllian lady, he's pronounced to be over head and ears in love, and of course meditating marriage—I say she's not the most reliable critic in the world in an affair of that sort, and all I say is that I've given *no* grounds for any such idea, and I mean it, upon my honor as a gentleman; and I've seldom been so astonished in my life before."

There was an air of frank and indignant repudiation in Cleve's manner and countenance, which more even than his words convinced Tom Sedley, who certainly was aware how little the Cardyllian people knew of the world, and what an eminently simple maiden in all such matters the homely Miss Charity was. So Tom extended his hand and said—

"Well, Cleve, I'm so glad, and I beg your pardon, and I know you say truth, and pray shake hands; but though you are not to blame—I'm now quite *sure* you're not—the poor girl is very unhappy, and her sister very angry."

"I can't help *that*. How on earth can *I* help it? I'm very sorry, though I'm not sure that I ought to care a farthing about other people's nonsense, and huffs, and romances. I could tell you things about myself, lots of things you'd hardly believe—*real, dreadful* annoyances. I tell you, Tom, I hate the life I'm leading.

You only see the upper surface, and hardly that. I'm worried to death, and only that I owe so much money, and can't get away, I can tell you—I don't care two pins whether you believe it or not—I should have been feeding sheep in Australia a year ago."

"Better where you are, Cleve."

"How the devil do *you* know? Don't be offended with me, Tom, only make allowances, and if I sometimes talk a bit like a Bedlamite, don't repeat my ravings; that's all. Look at that windmill; isn't it pretty?"

CHAPTER XLVII.

LADY DORMINSTER'S BALL.

Cleve Verney was in harness again—attending the House with remarkable punctuality; for the eye of the noble peer, his uncle, was upon him. He had the division lists regularly on his table, and if Cleve's name was missing from any one of even moderate importance, his uncle took leave to ask an explanation. Cleve had also reasons of his own for working diligently at the drudgery of public life. His march was not upon solid ground, but over a quaking bog, every undulation and waver of which was answered by a qualm at his heart.

Still it was only some nice management of time and persons; it was a mere matter of presence of mind, of vigilance, of resource, to which he felt—at least hoped—he might be found equal, and all *must* end well. Was not his uncle sixty-six his last birthday? People might flatter and say he looked nothing like it; but the red book so pronounced, and there is no gainsaying that sublime record. After all his uncle was not an everlasting danger. Time and the hour will end the longest day; and then must come the title, and estates, and a quiet heart at last.

When the House did not interfere, Cleve was of course seen at all the proper places. On the night of which I am now speaking there was among others Lady Dorminster's ball, and a brilliant muster of distinguished persons.

On that crowded floor, in those celebrated saloons, in an atmosphere of light and music, in which moved so much of what is famous, distinguished, splendid, is seen the figure of Cleve Verney. Every one knew that slight and graceful figure, and the oval face, delicate features, and large, dark, dreamy eyes, that never failed to impress you with the same ambiguous feeling. It was Moorish, it was handsome; but there was a shadow there—something secret and selfish, and smilingly, silently insolent.

This session he had come out a little, and made two speeches of real promise. The ministers had complimented his uncle upon them, and had also complimented him. The muse was there; something original and above routine—genius perhaps—and that passion for distinction which breaks a poor man's heart, and floats the rich to greatness.

A man of Cleve's years, with his position, with his promise, with London life and Paris life all learned by rote, courted and pursued, wary, contemptuous, sensual, clever, ambitious—is not young. The whole chaperon world, with its wiles, was an open book for him. For him, like the man in the German legend, the earth under which they mined and burrowed had grown to his eyes transparent, and he saw the gnomes at work. For him young ladies' smiles were not light and magic—only marsh fires and tricks. To him old and young came up and simpered or fawned; but they dimpled or ogled or grinned, all in the Palace of Truth. Truth is power, but not always pretty. For common men the surface is best; all beyond that is knowledge—an acquisition of sorrow.

Therefore, notwithstanding his years, the clear olive oval of his handsome face, the setting—void of line or color—of those deep dark eyes, so enthusiastic, yet so cold, the rich wave of his dark hair, and the smooth transparency of temples and forehead, and all the tints and signs of beautiful youth, Cleve Verney was well stricken in years of knowledge; and of that sad gift he would not have surrendered an iota in exchange for the charms and illusions of innocence, so much for the most part do men prefer power to happiness.

"How d'ye do, Miss Oldys?" said this brilliant young man of actualities and expectations.

"Oh, Mr. Verney, *you* here?"

This pretty Caroline Oldys was just five-and-twenty, and in her sixth London season. Old, like him, in the world's dismal psychology, betrayed into a transient surprise, smiling in genuine gladness, almost forgetting herself, and looking quite country-girlish in the momentary effusion. It is not safe affecting an emotion with men like Cleve, especially when it does not flatter them. He did not care a farthing whether she was surprised or not, or glad or sorry. But her very eye and gesture told him that she had marked him as he stood there, and had chosen the very seat on which her partner had placed her of malice-aforethought. Fine acting does it need to succeed with a critic like Cleve.

"Yes, I here—and where's the wonder?"

"Why—who was it?—*some* one told me only half an hour ago, you were somewhere in France."

"Well, if it was a man he told a story, and if a lady she made a mistake," said Cleve coolly but tartly, looking steadily at her. "And the truth is, I wanted a yacht, and I went down to look at her, tried her, liked her, and bought her. Doesn't it sound very like a marriage?"

Ethel laughed.

"That's your theory—we're all for sale, and handed over to the best bidder."

"Pretty valtz," said Cleve, waving his slen-

der hand just the least in the world to the music. "Pretty thing!"

He did not use much ceremony with this young lady—his cousin in some remote way—who under the able direction of her mother, Lady Wimbledon, had once pursued him in a barefaced way for nearly three years, and who, though as we have seen, her mother had by this time quite despaired, yet liked him with all the romance that remained to her.

"And who are you going to marry, Caroline? There's Sedley—I see him over there. What do you say to Sedley?"

"No, thanks—much obliged—but Sedley, you know, has seen his fate in that mysterious lady in Wales, or somewhere. I once had a letter from him."

"Oh! has he?" He signed to Sedley to come to them.

Looking through the chinks and chasms that now and then opened in the distinguished mob of which he formed a unit, he occasionally saw the stiff figure and small features of his pompous uncle, Lord Verney, who was talking affably to Lady Wimbledon, whom he used to hate. Lord Verney did not wear his agreeable simper. He had that starch and dismal expression, rather, which came with grave subjects, and he was tapping the fingers of his right hand upon the back of his left, in time to the cadence of his periods, which he did when delivering matter particularly well worth hearing. It plainly did not displease Lady Wimbledon, whatever his discourse might be. "I'm to be married to Caroline, I suppose. I wish that old woman was at the bottom of the Red Sea."

Cleve looked straight in the eyes of the Honorable Miss Oldys, and said he, with a smile, "Lady Wimbledon and my uncle are deep in some mystery—is it political? Have you an idea?"

Caroline Oldys had given up blushing very long ago indeed; but there was the confusion, without the tint of a blush in her face, as he said these words.

"I dare say—mamma's a great politician."

"Oh! I know that. By Jove, my uncle's looking this way. I hope he's not coming."

"Would you mind taking me to mamma?"

"No—pray stay for a moment. Here's Sedley."

And the young man, whom we know pretty well, with the bold blue eyes and golden mustaches, and good frank handsome face, approached smiling.

"How are you, Sedley?" said Cleve, giving him two fingers. "Caroline Oldys says you've had an adventure. Where was it?"

"The lady in black, you know, in Wales," reminded Miss Oldys.

"Oh! to be sure," said Sedley, laughing. "A lady in gray, it was. I saw her twice. But that's more than a year old, and there has been nothing ever since."

"*Do* go on."

Sedley laughed.

"It was at Cardyllian, in the church. She lived at Malory—that dark old place you went to see with the Verneys, the day you were at Cardyllian—don't you remember?"

"Oh, yes, what a romantic place!"

"With an awfully cross old fellow, old enough to be her father, but with the air of her husband, guarding her like a dragon, and eyeing every follow that came near as if he'd knock him down; a lean, white whiskered, bald old fellow, with bushy eyebrows, and a fierce face, and eyes jumping out of his head, and lame of one foot, too. Not a beauty by any means."

"Where did you see *him?*" said Cleve.

"I did not see him—but Christmas Jones the boatman told me."

"Well, and which is your fate—which is to kill you—the husband or wife?" inquired Cleve, looking vaguely among the crowd.

"Oh, the wife, as he calls her, is really quite beautiful, melancholy and that, you know. I'd have found out all about them, but they left before I had time to go back, but Verney was at Cardyllian, when I was there."

"When was that?" asked Cleve.

"I mean when these people were at Malory. Cleve was much more gone about her than I was—at least so I've heard," answered Sedley.

"That's very ungrateful of you, Sedley. I never interfered, upon my honor. I saw her once in church, and accompanied him in his pursuit at his earnest request, and I never saw her again. Are you going on to the Halbury's, Caroline?"

"Yes; are you?"

"No, quite used up. Haven't slept since Wednesday night."

Here a partner came to claim Miss Caroline.

"I'll go with you," said Sedley.

"Very well," answered Cleve, without looking back. "Come to my lodgings, Sedley—we'll smoke, shall we? I've some capital cigars."

"I don't care. I'm going on also."

"What a delicious night!" exclaimed Tom Sedley, looking up at the stars. "Suppose we walk—it isn't far."

"I don't care—let us walk," said Cleve.

So walk they did. It was not far to Cleve's lodgings, in a street off Piccadilly. The young men had walked rather silently; for, as it seemed to Sedley, his companion was not in a temper to talk a great deal, or very pleasantly.

"And what about this gray woman? Did the romance take fire where it ought? Is it a mutual flame?" asked Cleve, like a tired man who feels he must say something, and does not care what. "I don't think you mentioned her since the day you showed me that Beatrice Cenci, over your d—d chimney-piece."

"Of course I'd have told you if there had been any thing to tell," said Tom.

"They haven't been at Malory since?"

"Oh! no—frightened away—you'll never see them there again. There's nothing absolutely in it, and never was, not even an ad-

venture," continued Sedley. "She's a wonderfully beautiful creature, though; I wish you saw her again, Cleve. You're such a clever fellow, you'd make a poem out of her, or something—she'd bring you back to the days of chivalry, and that style of thing. I'm a sort of a fellow, you know, that feels a lot, and I think, I *think* some too; but I haven't the knack of saying it, or writing it—I'm not particularly good at any thing; but I went that morning, you know, into the refectory—you know—there are such a lot of stairs, and long places and doors, it makes a fellow quite foolish—and there she was—I wish I could describe her to you."

"Don't try—you've tried so often—there's a good fellow; but just tell me what is her name?" said Cleve, looking straight before him, above the lamps and the slanting slates and chimneys, into the deep sky, where brilliantly, spite of London smoke, shone the clear sad moon.

"Her name?—I never found out, except Margaret—I don't know; but I believe they did not want their name told."

"That did not look well—did it?" suggested Cleve.

"Well, no more it generally does; but it is not her fault. It was—in fact it was—old Sir Booth Fanshawe, you know he's broken—not worth a guinea—and always running about from place to place to avoid pursuit, in fact. It can't signify, you know, now that I think of it, mentioning him, because, of course, he's gone somewhere else long ago."

So said romantic little Sedley, and Cleve sneered.

"I see you can tell a fib on occasion, Tom, like another man. So you found out the name, and knew it all the time you were protesting ignorance. And who told you *that?* People here thought Sir Booth had gone to Italy."

"Well, it was, but you mustn't tell him I told you. There was a Jew fellow down at Malory, with a writ and a lot of fellows to nab him; but the old fellow was off; and the Jew thinking that Wynne Williams knew where he was, came to his office and offered him a hatful of money to tell, and he was going to kick him out; and that's the way *he* found out it was old Sir Booth; and he is awfully afraid of getting into a scrape about it, if the old people heard who the tenant was."

"So he would—the worst scrape he ever was in, with my *uncle*, at all events. And that d—d Larkin would get into the management of every thing I suppose. I hope you have not been telling every one?"

"Not a soul—not a human being."

"There are some of the Cardyllian people that hardly come under that term; and, by Jove, if you breathe it to one of them, it's all over the town, and my uncle would be sure to hear it; and poor Wynne Williams!—you'll be the ruin of him very likely."

"I tell you, except to you, I *swear* to you, I haven't mentioned it to a soul on earth," exclaimed Tom.

"Well, I do think, as a matter of conscience and fairness, you ought to hold your tongue, and keep faith with poor Wynne," said Cleve rudely, "and I think he was a monstrous fool to tell you. You know I'm interested," continued Cleve, perceiving that his vehemence surprised Tom Sedley; "because I have no faith in Larkin—I think him a sneak and a hypocrite, and a rogue—of course that's in confidence, and he's doing all in his power to get a fast hold upon my uncle, and to creep into Wynne Williams's place, and a thing like this, with a hard unreasonable fellow like my uncle, would give him such a lift as you can't imagine."

"But, I'm not going to tell; unless you tell, or *he*, I don't know who's to tell it—*I* won't, I know." "And about Sir Booth—of course he's not in England now—but neither is he in Italy," said Tom.

"It's well he has you to keep his 'log' for him," said Cleve.

"He's in France."

"Oh!"

"Yes, in the north of France, somewhere near Caen," said Tom Sedley.

"I wonder you let him go so near England. It seems rather perilous, doesn't it?"

"So one would think, but *there* he is. Tom Blackmore, of the Guards, you know him?"

"No, I don't."

"Well, he saw old Fanshawe there. He happened to be on leave."

"Old Fanshawe?"

"No, Tom Blackmore. He likes poking into out-of-the-way places."

"I dare say."

"He has such a turn for the picturesque and all that, and draws very nicely."

"The long bow, I dare say."

"Well, no matter, he was there—Old Fanshawe I mean—Blackmore saw him. He knows his appearance perfectly—used to hunt with his hounds, and that kind of thing, and often talked to him, so he could not be mistaken—and there he was as large as life."

"Well"?

"He did not know Tom a bit, and Tom asked no questions—in fact he did not care to know where the poor old fellow hides himself—he prefered not—but Madam something or other—I forget her name—gave him a history, about as true as Jack the Giant-Killer, or the eccentric English gentleman, and told him that he had taken a great old house, and had his family there, and a most beautiful young wife, and was as jealous as fifty devils; so you see Margaret must have been there. Of course that was she," said Tom.

"And you said so to your friend Blackmore?" suggested Cleve Verney.

"Yes," said Tom, "there was no harm in *that*. She's not in danger of those d—d writs and things."

"It seems to me you want to have him caught."

"Well, I don't see."

"Why, saying that had just *this* advantage. That prating Guardsman was sure to talk of the matter when you gave him that subject, although he would probably never have thought again of having seen old Fanshawe, as you call Sir Booth, in France, if it had not been for that."

"Well, I did not think—I hope not—and I did not know you took any interest in him," said Sedley, quite innocently.

"Interest! *I*—me! Interest, indeed! Why the devil should *I* take an interest in Sir Booth Fanshawe? Why, you seem to forget all the troubl eand annoyance he has cost me. Interest, indeed! Quite the contrary. Only, I think, one would not like to get any poor devil into worse trouble than he's in, for no object, or to be supposed to be collecting information about him."

"No one could suppose any thing like that of me," said Tom Sedley.

"I beg your pardon; they can suppose any thing of any body," answered Cleve, and seeing that Tom looked offended, he added, "and the more absurd and impossible, the more likely with some people. I wish you heard the things that have been said of *me*—enough to make your hair stand on end, by Jove!"

"Oh! I dare say."

They were now turning into the street where Cleve had taken lodgings.

"I could not stand those fellows any longer. My uncle has filled the house with them—varnish and paint and that stifling plaster—so I've put up here for a little time."

"I like these streets. I'm not very far away from you here," said Tom. "And talking of that affair at Caen, you know, he said, by Jove he did, that he saw *you* there."

"Who said?"

"Tom Blackmore of the Guards."

"Then Tom Blackmore of the Guards *lies*—that's all. You may tell him I said so. I never saw him—I never spoke to him—I don't know him; and how should he know me? And if he did, I wasn't there; and if I had been, what the devil was it to him? So besides telling lies, he tells *impertinent* lies, and he ought to be kicked."

"Well, of course as you say so, he must have made a mistake; but Caen is as open to you as to him, and there's no harm in the place; and he knows you by appearance."

"He knows every body by appearance, it seems, and nobody knows him; and, by Jove, he describes more like a bailiff than a Guardsman."

"He's a thorough gentleman in every *idea*. Tom Blackmore is as nice a little fellow as there is in the world," battled Tom Sedley for his friend.

"Well, I wish you'd persuade that faultless gentleman to let me and my concerns alone. I have a reason in this case; and I don't mind if I tell you, I *was* at Caen, and I suppose he *did* see me. But there was no romance in the matter, except the romance of the Stock Exchange and a Jew; and I wish, Tom, you'd just consider *me* as much as you do the old baronet, for my own sake, that is, for *I'm* pretty well dipt too, and don't want every one to know when or where I go in quest of my Jews. I *was* not very far from that about four months ago; and if you go about telling every one, by Jove my uncle will guess what brought me there, and old fellows don't like *post-obits* on their own lives."

"My dear Cleve, I had not a notion—"

"Well, all you can do for me now, having spread the report, is to say that I *wasn't* there—I'm serious. Here we are."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

A LARK.

"THERE's some 'Old Tom,' isn't there? Get it, and glasses and cold water, *here*," said Cleve to his servant, who, patient, polite, sleepy, awaited his master. "You used to like it—and here are cigars;" and he shook out a shower upon his drawing-room table cover. "And where did you want to go at this time of night?"

"To Wright's, to see the end of the great game of billiards — Seller and Culverin, you know; I've two pounds on it."

"Don't care if I go with you, just now. What's this?—When the devil did this come?" Cleve had picked up and at one pale glance read a little note that lay on the table; and then he repeated coolly enough—

"I say, when did this come?"

"Before one, sir, I think," said Shepperd.

"Get me my coat," and Shepperd disappeared.

"Pestered to *death* about money," he said, moodily. "Upon my soul, I think if my uncle *will* make a statesman of me, he ought in conscience to enable me to *live* without selling my vote; see, you have got the things here, and cigars. I shan't be five minutes away. If I'm longer, don't wait for me; but finish this first."

Cleve had turned up the collar of his outer coat, and buttoned it across his chin, and pulled a sort of traveling cap down on his brows, and let the silk flaps cover his cheeks, and away he went.

He did not come back in five minutes; nor in ten, twenty, or forty minutes. The "Old Tom" in the bottle had run low; Sedley looked at his watch; he could wait no longer.

When he got out upon the flagway, though not quite tipsy, he felt the agreeable stimulus of the curious "Old Tom" sufficiently to render a little pause expedient for the purpose of calling to mind with clearness the geographical bearings of Wright's billiard-rooms—whither accordingly—eastward, along deserted and echoing streets, with here and there a policeman poking into an area, or sauntering along his

two-mile-an-hour duty, march, and now and then regaled by the unearthly music of love-sick cats among the roofs.

These streets and squares, among which he had in a manner lost himself, had in their day been the haunts and quarters of fashion, a fairy world, always migrating before the steady march of business. Sedley had quite lost his reckoning. If he had been content to go by Ludgate Hill, he would have been at Wright's half an hour before. Sedley did not know these dingy and respectable old squares; he had not even seen a policeman for the last twenty minutes, and was just then quite of the Irish lawyer's opinion that life is not long enough for short cuts.

In a silent street he passed a carriage standing near a lamp. The driver on the flagway looked hard at him. Sedley was not a romantic being only; he had also his waggish mood, and loved a lark when it came. He returned the fellow's stare with a glance as significant, slackening his pace.

"Well?" said Sedley.

"Well!" replied the driver.

"Capital!" answered Sedley.

"Be you him?" demanded the driver, after a pause.

"No; be *you?*" answered Sedley.

The driver seemed a little puzzled, and eyed Sedley doubtfully; and Sedley looked into the carriage, which, however, was empty, and then at the house at whose rails it stood; but it was dark from top to bottom.

He had thoughts of stepping in and availing himself of the vehicle; but seeing no particular fun in the procedure, and liking better to walk, he merely said, nodding toward the carriage—

"Lots of room."

"Room enough, I dessay."

"How long do you mean to wait?"

"As long as I'm paid for."

"Give my love to your mother."

"Feard she won't vally it."

"Take care of yourself for my sake."

Doubtless there was a retort worthy of so sprightly a dialogue; but Sedley could not hear distinctly as he paced on, looking up at the moon, and thinking how beautifully she used to shine, and was no doubt then shining, on the flashing blue sea at Cardyllian, and over the misty mountains. And he thought of his pretty cousin Agnes Etherage; and "Yes," said he within himself, quickening his pace, "if I win that two pounds at Wright's, I'll put two pounds to it, the two pounds I should have lost, that is—there's nothing extravagant in that—and bring little Agnes something pretty; I said I would; and though it was only joke, still it's a promise."

Sedley was a good-natured fellow. Some tradesmen's bills that morning had frightened him, and as he periodically did, he had bullied himself into resolutions of economy, out of which he ingeniously reasoned himself again. "What shall it be? I'll look in to-morrow at Dymock & Rose's—they have lots of charming little French trifles. Where the deuce are we now?"

He paused, and looking about him, and then down a stable-lane between two old-fashioned houses of handsome dimensions, he saw a fellow in a great-coat loitering slowly down it, and looking up vigilantly at the two or three windows in the side of the mansion.

"A robbery, by George!" thought Sedley, as he marked the prowling vigilance of the man, and his peculiar skulking gait.

He had no sort of weapon about him, not even a stick; but he is one of the best sparrers extant of his weight, and thinks pluck and "a fistful of fives" well worth a revolver.

Sedley hitched his shoulders, plucked off one glove that remained on, and followed him softly a few steps, dogging him down the lane, with that shrewd, stern glance which men exchange in the prize ring. But when on turning about the man in the surtout saw that he was observed, he confirmed Sedley's suspicions by first pausing irresolutely, and ultimately withdrawing suddenly round the angle.

Sedley had not expected this tactique. For whatever purpose, the man had been plainly watching the house, and it was nearly three o'clock. Thoroughly blooded now for a "lark," Sedley followed swiftly to the corner, but could not see him; so, as he returned, a low window in the side-wall opened, and a female voice said, "Are you there?"

"Yes," replied Tom Sedley, confidentially drawing near.

"Take this."

"All right"—and thereupon he received first a bag and then a box, each tolerably heavy.

Sedley was amused. A mystification had set in; a quiet robbery, and he the receiver. He thought of dropping the booty down the area of the respectable house round the corner, but just then the man in the surtout emerged from the wing, so to speak, and marching slowly up the perspective of the lane, seemed about to disturb him, but once more changed his mind and disappeared.

"What is to happen next?" wondered Tom Sedley. In a few minutes a door which opens from the back yard or garden of the house from which he had received his burden opened cautiously, and a woman in a black cloak stepped out, carrying another bag, a heavy one it also seemed, and beckoning to him, said, so soon as he was sufficiently near—

"Is the carriage come?"

"Yes'm," answered Tom, touching his hat, and affecting as well as he could the ways of a porter or a cabman.

"When they comes," she resumed, "you'll bring us to where it is, mind, and fetch the things with you—and mind ye, no noise nor talking, and walk as light as you can."

"All right," said Tom, in the same whisper in which she spoke.

It could not be a robbery—Tom had changed his mind; there was an air of respectability about the servant that conflicted with that theory, and the discovery that the carriage was

waiting to receive the party was also against it. Tom was growing more interested in his adventure; and entering into the fuss and mystery of the plot.

"Come round, please, and show me where the carriage stands," said the woman, beckoning to Tom, who followed her round the corner.

She waited for him, and laid her hand on his elbow, giving him a little jog by way of caution.

"Hush—not a word above your breath, mind," she whispered; "*I* see that's it; well, it needn't come no nearer, mind."

"All right, ma'am."

"And there's the window," she added in a still more cautious whisper, and pointing with a nod and a frown at a window next the hall-door, through the shutter of which a dim light was visible.

"Ha!" breathed Tom, looking wise, "and all safe *there?*"

"We're never sure; sometimes awake; sometimes not; sometimes quiet; sometimes quite wild-like; and the window pushed open for hair! Hoffle he is!"

"And always was," hazarded Tom.

"Wuss now, though," whispered she, shaking her head ruefully, and she returned round the angle of the house and entered the door through which she had issued, and Tom set down his load not far from the same point.

Before he had waited many minutes the same door re-opened, and two ladies, as he judged them to be from something in their air and dress, descended the steps together, followed by the maid carrying the black-leather bag as before. They stopped just under the door, which the servant shut cautiously and locked; and then these three female figures stood for a few seconds whispering together; and after that they turned and walked up the lane toward Tom Sedley, who touched his hat as they approached, and lifted his load again.

The two ladies were muffled in cloaks. The taller wore no hat or bonnet; but had instead a shawl thrown over her head and shoulders, hood-wise. She walked, leaning upon the shorter lady, languidly, like a person very weak, or in pain, and the maid at the other side, placed her arm tenderly round her waist, under her mufflers, and aided her thus as she walked. They crossed the street at the end of the stable-lane, and walked at that side toward the carriage. The maid signed to Tom, who carried his luggage quickly to its destination on the box, and was in time to open the carriage door.

"Don't you mind," said the woman, putting Tom unceremoniously aside, and herself aiding the taller lady into the old-fashioned carriage. As she prepared to mount, Tom for a moment fancied a recognition; something in the contour of the figure, muffled as it was for a second struck him; and at the same moment all seemed like a dream, and he stepped backward involuntarily in amazement. Had he not seen the same gesture. The arm moved backward, exactly so, and that slender hand in a gardening glove, holding a tiny trowel, under the dark transparent foliage of old trees?

The momentary gesture was gone. The lady leaning back, a muffled figure, in the corner of the carriage, silent. Her companion, who he thought looked sharply at him from within, now seated beside her; and the maid also from her place inside, told him from the window—

"Bid him drive now where he knows, quickly," and she pulled up the window.

Tom was too much interested now to let the thread of his adventure go. So to the box beside the driver he mounted, and delivered the order he had just received.

Away he drove swiftly, cityward through silent and empty streets. Tom quickly lost his bearings; the gas-lamps grew few and far between; he was among lanes and arches, and sober, melancholy streets, such as he had never suspected of an existence in such a region.

Here the driver turned suddenly up a narrow way between old brick walls, with tufts of dingy grass here and there at top, and the worn mortar lines overlaid with velvet moss. This short passage terminated in two tall brick piers, surmounted by worn and moss-grown urns of stone.

Tom jumped down and pushed back the rusty iron gates, and they drove into an unlighted, melancholy court-yard; and Tom thundered at a tall narrow hall-door, between chipped and worn pilasters of the same white stone, surmounted by some carved heraldry, half effaced.

Standing on the summit of the steps he had to repeat his summons, till the cavernous old mansion pealed again with the echo, before a light gave token of the approach of a living being to give them greeting.

Tom opened the carriage door, and let down the steps, perhaps a little clumsily, but he was getting through his duties wonderfully.

The party entered the spacious wainscoted hall, in which was an old wooden bench, on which, gladly, it seemed, the sick lady sat herself down. A great carved door-way opened upon a square second hall or lobby, through which the ray of the single candle glanced duskily, and touched the massive banisters of a broad staircase.

This must have been the house of a very great man in its day, a lord chancellor, perhaps, one of those Hogarthian mansions in which such men as my Lord Squanderfield might have lived in the first George's days.

"How could any man have been such an idiot," thought Sedley, filled with momentary wonder, "as to build a palace like this in such a place?"

"Dear me! what a place—what a strange place!" whispered the elder and shorter lady, "where are we to go?"

"Up stairs, please'm," said the woman with a brass candlestick in her hand.

"I hope there's fire, and more light, and—and proper comfort there?"

"Oh! yes'm, please; everythink as you would like, please."

"Come, dear," said the old lady tenderly,

giving her arm to the languid figure resting in the hall.

So guided and lighted by the servant, they followed her up the great well staircase.

CHAPTER XLIX.

A NEW VOICE.

The ladies ascended, led by the maid with the candle, and closely followed by their own servant, and our friend Tom Sedley brought up the rear, tugging the box and the bag with him.

At the stair-head was a great gallery from which many doors opened. Tom Sedley halted close by the banister for orders, depositing his luggage beside him. The maid set the candle down upon a table, and opened one of these tall doors, through which he saw an angle of the apartment, a fire burning in the grate, and a pleasant splendor of candle-light; he saw that the floor was carpeted, and the windows curtained, and though there was disclosed but a corner of a large room, there were visible such pieces of furniture as indicated general comfort.

In a large arm-chair, at the farther side of the fire-place, sat the lady who had thrilled him with a sudden remembrance. She had withdrawn the shawl that hung in hood-like fashion over her head, and there was no longer a doubt. The Beatrice Cenci was there—his Guido—very pale, dying he thought her, with her white hands clasped, and her beautiful eyes turned upward in an agony of prayer.

The old lady, Miss Sheckleton, came near her, leaned over her, kissed her tenderly, and caressingly smoothed her rich chestnut hair over her temples, and talked gently in her ear, and raised her hand in both hers, and kissed it, and drawing a chair close to hers, she sat by her, murmuring in her ear with a countenance of such kindness and compassion, that Tom Sedley loved her for it.

Looking up, Miss Sheckleton observed the door open, and Tom fancied perceived him in the perspective through it, for she rose suddenly, shut it, and he saw no more. Tom had not discovered in the glance of the old lady any sign of recognition, and for the sake of appearances he had buttoned his gray wrapper close across his throat and breast so as to conceal the evidences of his ball costume; his shining boots, however, were painfully conspicuous, but for that incongruity there was no help.

And now the servant who had let them in told Tom to bring the box and bag into the servants' room, to which she led him across the gallery.

There was a large fire, which was pleasant, a piece of matting on the floor, a few kitchen utensils ranged near the fire-place, a deal table, and some common kitchen chairs. Dismal enough would the room have looked, notwithstanding its wainscoting, had it not been for the glow diffused by the fire.

By this fire, on a kitchen chair, and upon his own opera hat, which he wished specially to suppress, sat Tom Sedley, resolved to see his adventure one hour or so into futurity, before abandoning it, and getting home to his bed, and in the mean time doing his best to act a servant, as he fancied such a functionary would appear in his moments of ease unbending in the kitchen or the servants' hall. The maid who had received the visitors in the hall, Anne Evans by name, square, black-haired, slightly pitted with small-pox, and grave, came and sat down at the other side of the fire, and eyed Tom Sedley in silence.

Now and then Tom felt uncomfortably about his practical joke, which was degenerating into a deception. But an hour or so longer could not matter much; and might he not make himself really useful if the services of a messenger were required?

Anne Evans was considering him in silence, and he turned a little more toward the fire, and poked it, as he fancied a groom would poke a fire for his private comfort.

"Are you servant to the ladies?" at last she asked.

Tom smiled at the generality of the question, but interpreting in good faith—

"No," said he, "I came with the carriage."

"Servant to the gentleman?" she asked.

"What gentleman?"

"You know well."

Tom had not an idea, but could not well say so. He therefore poked the fire again, and said, "Go on, miss; I'm listening."

She did not go on, however, for some time, and then it was to say—

"My name is Anne Evans. What may your name be?"

"Can't tell that. I left my name at home," said Tom, mysteriously.

"Won't tell?"

"Can't."

"I'm only by the month. Come in just a week to-morrow," observed Anne Evans.

"They'll not part you in a month, Miss Evans. No; they has some taste and feelin' among them. I wouldn't wonder if you was here forever!" said Tom, with enthusiasm: "and what's this place, miss—this house I mean—whose house is it?"

"Can't say, only I hear it's bought for a brewery, to be took down next year."

"Oh, criky!" said Tom; "that's a pity."

There was a short pause.

"I saw you 'ide your 'at," said Anne Evans.

"Not 'ide it," said Tom—only sits on it—always sits on my 'at."

Tom produced it, let it bounce up like a jack-in-a-box, and shut it down again.

Miss Evans was neither amused nor surprised.

"Them's hopera 'ats—first quality—they used to come in boxes on 'em, as long as from here to you, when I was at Mr. Potterton's, the hatter. Them's for gents—they air—and not for servants."

"The gov'nor gives me his old uns," said Tom, producing the best fib he could find.

"And them French boots," she added, meditatively.

"Perquisite likewise," said Tom.

Miss Anne Evans closed her eyes, and seemed disposed to take a short nap in her chair. But on a sudden she opened her eyes to say—

"I think you're the gentleman himself."

"The old gentleman?" said Tom.

"No. The young un."

"I'm jest what I tell you, not objectin' to the compliment all the same," said Tom.

"And a ring on your finger?"

"A ring on my finger—yes. I wear it two days in the week. My grand-uncle's ring, who was a gentleman, being skipper of a coal brig."

"What's the lady's name?"

"Can't tell, Miss Evans; dussn't."

"Fuss about nothin'!" said she, and closed her eyes again, and opened them in a minute more to add, "but I think you're him, and that's *my* belief."

"No, I ain't, miss, as you'll see by and by."

"Tisn't nothin' to me, only people *is* so close."

The door opened, and a tall woman in black, with a black net cap on, came quietly but quickly into the room.

"You're the man?" said she, with an air of authority, fixing her eyes askance on Tom.

"Yes'm, please."

"Well, you don't go on no account, for you'll be wanted just now."

"No, ma'am."

"Where's the box and bag you're in charge of?"

"Out here," said Tom.

"Hish, man, quiet; don't you know there's sickness? Walk easy, *can't* you? *please*, consider."

Tom followed her almost on tiptoe to the spot where the parcels lay.

"Gently now; into this room, please," and she led the way into that sitting-room into which Tom Sedley had looked some little time since, from the stair-head.

The beautiful young lady was gone, but Miss Sheckleton was standing at the farther door of the room with her hands clasped, and her eyes raised in prayer, and her pale cheeks wet with tears.

Hearing the noise, she gently closed the door, and hastily drying her eyes, whispered, "set them down *there*," pointing to a sofa, on which Tom placed them accordingly. "Thanks—that will do. You may go."

When Sedley had closed the door—

"Oh, Mrs. Graver," whispered Anne Sheckleton, clasping her wrists in her trembling fingers, "is she *very* ill?"

"Well, ma'am, she *is* ill."

"But, oh, my God, you don't think we are going to lose her?" she whispered wildly, with her imploring gaze in the nurse's eyes.

"Oh, no, please God, ma'am, it will all be right. You must not fuss yourself, ma'am. You must not let her see you like this, on no account."

"Shall I send for him now?"

"No, ma'am; he'd only be in the way. *I'll* tell you when; and his man's here, ready to go, any minute. I must go back to her now, ma'am. Hish!"

And Mrs. Graver disappeared with a little rustle of her dress, and no sound of steps. That solemn bird floated very noiselessly round sick-beds, and you only heard, as it were, the hovering of her wings.

And then, in a minute more, in glided Miss Sheckleton, having dried her eyes very carefully.

And now came a great knocking at the hall-door, echoing dully through the house. It was Doctor Grimshaw, who had just got his coat off and was winding his watch, when he was called from his own bedside by this summons, and so was here after a long day's work, to make a new start, and await the dawn in this chamber of pain.

In he came, and Miss Sheckleton felt that light and hope entered the room with him. Florid, portly, genial, with a light, hopeful step, and a good, decided, cheery manner, he inspired confidence, and seemed to take command, not only of the case, but of the ailment itself.

Miss Sheckleton knew this good doctor, and gladly shook his hand; and he recognized her with a hesitating look that seemed to ask a question, but was not meant to do so, and he spoke cheerfully to the patient, and gave his directions to the nurse, and in about half an hour more told good Anne Sheckleton that she had better leave the patient.

So, with the docility which an able physician inspires, good Anne Sheckleton obeyed, and in the next room—sometimes praying, sometimes standing and listening, sometimes wandering from point to point, in the merest restlessness—she waited and watched for more than an hour, which seemed to her longer than a whole night, and at last tapped very gently at the door, a lull having come for a time in the sick-chamber, and unable longer to endure her suspense.

A little bit of the door was opened, and Anne Sheckleton saw the side of Mrs. Graver's straight nose, and one of her wrinkled eyes, and her grim mouth.

"How is she?" whispered Miss Sheckleton, feeling as if she was herself about to die.

"Pretty well, ma'am," answered the nurse, but with an awful look of insincerity, under which the old lady's heart sank down and down, as if it had foundered.

"One word to Dr. Grimshaw," she whispered, with white lips.

"You *can't*, ma'am," murmured the nurse sternly, and about to shut the door in her face.

"Wait, *wait*," whispered the voice of kind old Doctor Grimshaw, and he came into the next room to Miss Sheckleton, closing the door after him.

"Oh, doctor!" she gasped.

"Well, Miss Sheckleton, I hope she'll do very well; I've just given her something—a slight stimulant—and I've every confidence every thing will be well. Don't make yourself uneasy; it is not going on badly."

"Oh, Doctor Grimshaw, shall I send for him? He'd never forgive me; and I promised her, darling Margaret, to send."

"*Don't* send—on *no account* yet. Don't bring him here—he's better away. I'll tell you when to send."

The doctor opened the door.

"Still quiet?"

"Yes, sir," whispered Mrs. Graver.

Again he closed the door.

"Nice creature she seems. A relation of yours?" asked the doctor.

"My cousin."

"When was she married?"

"About a year ago."

"Never any tendency to consumption?"

"Never."

"Nothing to make her low or weak? Is she hysterical?"

"No, hardly that, but nervous and excitable."

"I know; very good. I think she'll do very nicely. If any thing goes the least wrong I'll let you know. Now stay quiet in there."

And he shut the door, and she heard his step move softly over the next room floor, so great was the silence, and she knelt down and prayed as people have prayed in shipwrecks; and more time passed, and more, slowly, very slowly. Oh, would the dawn ever come, and the day-light again?

Voices and moans she heard from the room. Again she prayed on her knees to the throne of mercy, in the agony of her suspense, and now over the strange roofs spread the first faint gray of the coming dawn; and there came a silence in the room, and on a sudden was heard a new tiny voice crying.

"The little child!" cried old Anne Sheckleton, springing to her feet, with clasped hands, in the anguish of delight, and such a gush of tears as she looked up, thanking God, with her smiles, as comes only in such moments.

Margaret's clear voice faintly said something; Anne could not hear what.

"A boy," answered the cheering voice of Doctor Grimshaw.

"Oh! he'll be so glad!" answered the faint clear voice in a kind of rapture.

"Of course he will," replied the same cheery voice. And another question came, too low for old Anne Sheckleton's ears.

"A *beautiful* boy! as fine a fellow as ever you could desire to look at. Bring him here, nurse."

"Oh! the darling!" said the same faint voice. "I'm so *happy*."

"Thank God! thank God! thank God!" sobbed delighted Anne Sheckleton, her cheeks still streaming in showers of tears as she stood waiting at the door for the moment of admission, and hearing the sweet happy tones of Margaret's voice sounding in her ears like the voice of one who had just now died, heard faintly through the door of heaven.

For thus it has been, and thus to the end it will be—the "sorrow" of the curse is remembered no more, "for joy that a man is born into the world."

CHAPTER L.

CLEVE COMES.

Tom Sedley was dozing in his chair by the fire, when he was roused by Mrs. Graver's voice.

"You'll take this note at once, please, to your master; there's a cab at the door, and the lady says you mustn't make no delay."

It took some seconds to enable Tom to account for the scene, the actor and his own place of repose, his costume, and the tenor of the strange woman's language. In a little while, however, he recovered the context, and the odd passage in his life became intelligible.

Still half asleep, Tom hurried down stairs, and in the hall, to his amazement, read the address, "Cleve Verney, Esq." At the hall-door steps he found a cab, into which he jumped, telling the man to drive to Cleve Verney's lodgings.

There were expiring lights in the drawing-room, the blinds of which were up, and as the cab stopped at the steps a figure appeared at one, and Cleve Verney opened the window and told the driver, "Don't mind knocking. I'll get down."

"Come up stairs," said Cleve, addressing Sedley, and mistaking him for the person whom he had employed.

Up ran Tom Sedley at his heels.

"Hollo! what brings *you* here?" said Cleve, when Tom appeared in the light of the candles. "You don't mean to say the ball has been going on till now—or is it a scrape?"

"Nothing—only this I've been commissioned to give you," and he placed Miss Sheckleton's note in his hand.

Cleve had looked wofully haggard and anxious as Tom entered. But his countenance changed now to an ashy paleness, and there was no mistaking his extreme agitation.

He opened the note—a very brief one it seemed—and read it.

"Thank God!" he said with a great sigh, and then he walked to the window and looked out, and returned again to the candles and read the note once more.

"How did you know I was up, Tom?"

"The lights in the windows."

"Yes. Don't let the cab go."

Cleve was getting on his coat, and speaking like a man in a dream.

"I say, Tom Sedley, how did you come by this note?" he said, with a sudden pause, and holding Miss Sheckleton's note in his fingers.

"Well, quite innocently," hesitated Sedley.

"How the devil was it, sir? Come, you ıay as well. By heaven, Sedley, you shall ɜll me the truth!"

Tom looked on his friend Cleve, and saw his yes gleaming sharply on him, and his face /hite with a kind of terror.

"Of course I'll tell you, Cleve," said Tom, nd with this exordium he stumbled honestly hrough his story, which by no means quieted 'leve Verney.

"You d—d little Paul Pry!" said he in an ndertone very viciously through his teeth. 'Well, you have got hold of a secret now, like he man in the iron chest, and by,—you had etter keep it."

A man who half blames himself already, and ; in a position which he hates and condemns, /ill stand a great deal more of hard language, nd even of execration, than he would under ny other imaginable circumstances.

"You can't blame me half as much as I do ıyself. I assure you, Cleve, I'm awfully sor-y. It was the merest lark—at first—and then /hen I saw that beautiful—that young lady—"

"Don't dare to talk of that lady any more; 'm her husband. *There*, you have it all, and f you whisper it to mortal you *may ruin* me; ut one or other of us shall die for it!"

Cleve was talking in a state of positive exas-eration.

"Whisper it!—tell it! You don't in the east understand me, Cleve," said Tom, collect-ng himself, and growing a little lofty. "I on't whisper or tell things; and as for daring r not daring, I don't know what you mean; nd I hope, if occasion for *dying* came, I should unk it as little as any other fellow."

"I'm going to this d—d place now. I don't nuch care what you do; I almost wish you'd hoot me."

He struck his hand on the table, looking not t Tom Sedley, but with a haggard rage through he window, and away toward the cold, gray ast; and without another word to Sedley, he an down, shutting the hall-door with a crash hat showed more of his temper than of his rudence, and Tom saw him jump into the cab nd drive away.

The distance is really considerable, but in 'leve's intense reverie time and space contract-d, and before he fancied they had accomplished ıalf the way, he found himself at the tall door nd stained pilasters and steps of the old red-rick house.

Anne Evans, half awake, awaited his arrival n the steps. He ran lightly up the stairs; nd, in obedience to Mrs. Graver's gesture of varning, as she met him with raised hand and ıer frowning "Hish" at the head of the stairs, ıe checked his pace, and in a whisper he made ıis eager inquiries. She was going on very ıicely.

"I must see Miss Sheckleton—the old lady—where is she?" urged Cleve.

"Here, sir, please"—and Mrs. Graver opened a door, and he found tired Miss Sheckleton tying on her bonnet, and getting her cloak about her.

"Oh! Cleve, dear"—she called him "Cleve" now—"I'm so delighted; she's doing *very* well; the doctor's quite *pleased* with her, and it's a boy, Cleve, and—and I wish you joy with all my heart."

And as she spoke, the kind old lady was shaking both his hands, and smiling up into his handsome face, like sunshine; but that handsome face, though it smiled down darkly upon her, was, it seemed to her, strangely joyless, and even troubled.

"And Cleve, dear, my *dear* Mr. Verney—I'm *so* sorry; but I must go immediately. I make his chocolate in the morning, and he sometimes calls for it at half past seven. This miserable attack that has kept him here, and the risk in which he is every day he stays in this town, it *is so* distracting. And if I should not be at home and ready to see him when he calls, he'd be sure to suspect something; and I really see nothing but ruin from his temper and violence to all of us, if he were to find out how it is. So good-bye, and God bless you. The doctor says he thinks you may see her in a very little time—half an hour or so—if you are very careful not to let her excite or agitate herself; and—God bless you—I shall be back, for a little, in an hour or two."

So that kindly, fluttered, troubled, and happy old lady disappeared; and Cleve was left again to his meditations.

"Where's the doctor?" asked Cleve of the servant.

"In the sitting-room, please, sir, writing; his carriage is come, sir, please."

And thus saying, Mistress Anne Evans officiously opened the door, and Cleve entered. The doctor, having written a prescription, and just laid down his pen, was pulling on his glove.

Cleve had no idea that he was to see Doctor Grimshaw. Quite another physician, with whom he had no acquaintance, had been agreed upon between him and Miss Sheckleton. As it turned out, however, that gentleman was now away upon an interesting visit to a noble lady, at a country mansion, and Doctor Grimshaw was thus unexpectedly summoned.

Cleve was unpleasantly surprised, for he had already an acquaintance with that good man, which he fancied was not recorded in his recollection to his credit. I think if the doctor's eye had not been directed toward the door when he entered, that Cleve Verney would have drawn back; but that would not do now.

"Doctor Grimshaw?" said Cleve.

"Yes, sir;" said the old gentleman.

"I think, Doctor Grimshaw, you know me?"

"Oh, yes, sir; of course I do," said the doctor, with an uncomfortable smile, ever so little bitter, and a slight bow; "Mr. Verney, yes." And the doctor paused, looking toward him, pulling on his other glove, and expecting a question.

"Your patient, Doctor Grimshaw, doing very well, I'm told?"

"Nicely, sir—very nicely now. I was a little uncomfortable about her just at one time, but doing very well now; and it's a boy—a fine child. Good-morning, sir."

He had taken up his hat.

"And, Doctor Grimshaw, just one word. May I beg, as a matter of professional *honor*, that this—all this, shall be held as strictly *secret*—every thing connected with it as strictly confidential?"

The doctor looked down on the carpet with a pained countenance. "Certainly, sir," he said, dryly. "That's all, I suppose? Of course, Mr. Verney, I shan't—since such I suppose to be the wish of all parties—mention the case."

"Of *all* parties, certainly; and it is in tenderness to others, not to myself, that I make the request."

"I'm sorry it should be necessary, sir," said Doctor Grimshaw, almost sternly. "I know Miss Sheckleton and her family; this poor young lady, I understand, is a cousin of hers. I am *sorry*, sir, upon her account, that any mystery should be desirable."

"It *is* desirable, and, in fact, *indispensable*, sir," said Cleve, a little stiffly, for he did not see what right that old doctor had to assume a lecturer's tone toward him.

"No one shall be compromised by me, sir," said the doctor, with a sad and offended bow.

And the doctor drove home pretty well tired out. I am afraid that Cleve did not very much care whom he might compromise, provided he himself were secure. But even from himself the utter selfishness, which toned a character passionate and impetuous enough to simulate quite unconsciously the graces of magnanimity and tenderness, was hidden.

Cleve fancied that the cares that preyed upon his spirits were for Margaret, and when he sometimes almost regretted their marriage, that his remorse was altogether for her, all his caution and finesse were exacted by his devotion to the interests of his young wife, and the long system of mystery and deception, under which her proud, frank spirit was pining, was practiced solely for her advantage.

So Cleve was in his own mind something of a hero—self-sacrificing, ready, if need be, to shake himself free, for sake of his love and his liberty, of all the intoxications and enervations of his English life, and *fortis colonus*, to delve the glebe of Canada or to shear the sheep of Australia. She was not conscious that all these were the chimeras of insincerity, that ambition was the breath of his nostrils, and that his idol was—himself.

And if he mistakes himself, do not others mistake him also, and clothe him with the nobleness of their own worship? Can it be that the lights and the music and the incense that surround him are but the tributes of a beautiful superstition, and that the idol in the midst is cold and dumb?

Cleve, to do him justice, was moved on this occasion. He did—shall I say?—yearn to behold her again. There was a revival of tenderness, and he waited with a real impatience to see her.

He did see her—just a little gleam of light in the darkened room; he stood beside the bed clasping that beautiful hand that God had committed to his, smiling down in that beautiful face that smiled unutterable love up again into his own.

"Oh! Cleve, darling—oh, Cleve! I'm so happy."

The languid hands are clasped on his, the yearning eyes, and the smile, look up. It is like the meeting of the beloved after shipwreck.

"And look, Cleve;" and with just ever so little a motion of her hand she draws back a fold of the coverlet, and he sees in a deep sleep a little baby, and the beautiful smile of young maternity falls upon it like a blessing and a caress. "Isn't it a darling? *Poor* little thing! how quietly it sleeps. I think it is the dearest little thing that ever was seen—*our* little baby!"

Is there a prettier sight than the young mother smiling, in this the hour of her escape, over the treasure she has found? The wondrous gift, at sight of which a new love springs up—never—never, while life remains, to cease its flowing. Looking on such a sight in silence, I think I hear the feet of the angels round the bed—I think I see their beautiful eyes smiling on the face of the little mortal, and their blessed hands raised over the head of the fair young mother.

CHAPTER LI.

"Teach me, ye groves, some art to ease my pain:
Some soft resentments that may leave no stain
On her loved name, and then I will complain."

NEXT day, after dinner, Lord Verney said to Cleve, as they two sat alone, "I saw you at Lady Dorminster's last night. I saw you—about it. It seems to me you go to too many places, with the House to attend to; you stay too long—one can look in, you know. Sometimes one meets a person; I had a good deal of interesting conversation last night, for instance, with the French Ambassador. No—he takes a hint better; they are very good listeners, the French, and that is the way they pick up so much information and opinion, and things. I had a cup of tea, and we talked—about it—for half an hour, until I had got my ideas well before him. A very able man, a brilliant person, and seemed—he appeared to go with me—about it—and very well up upon our *history*—and things—and—and—looking at you, it struck me—you're looking a good deal cut up, about it—and—and as if you were doing too much. As I said, you know, you were to look about and see if there was any young person you liked—that was suitable—and—that kind of thing; but you know you must not fatigue yourself, and I don't want to hurry you; only it is a step you

ought to take with a view to strengthen your position—ultimately. And—and—I hear it is oo late to consider about Ethel—that would have been very nice, it struck me; but that is now out of the question, I understand—in fact, t is certain, although the world don't know it et; and therefore we must consider some other lliance; and I don't see any very violent hurry. We must look about—and—and you'll want ome money, Cleve, when you have made up our mind."

"You are always too good," said Cleve.

"I—I mean with your *wife*—about it;" and Lord Verney coughed a little. "There's never ny harm in a little money; the more you get, he more you can do. I always was of that opinion. Knowledge is power, and money is power, though in different ways; that was always my idea. What I want to impress on your mind, however, at this moment, particularly, is, hat there is nothing very pressing as to time; we can afford a little time. The Onslow motto, you know, *it* conveys it, and your mother was onnected with the Onslows."

It would not be easy to describe how the words of his noble uncle relieved Cleve Verney. Every sentence seemed to lift a load from his burden, or to cut asunder some knot in the bondage of his bonds. He had not felt so much at ease since his hated conversation with Lord Verney in the library.

Not very long after this, Cleve made the best speech by many degrees he had ever spoken, a really forcible reply upon a subject he had very carefully made up, of which, in fact, he was a master. His uncle was very much pleased, and gave his hearers to understand pretty distinctly from what fountain he had drawn his inspiration, and promised them better things still, now that he had got him fairly in harness, and had him into his library, and they put their heads together; and he thought his talking with him a little did him no harm, Cleve's voice was so good, he could make himself heard—you must be able to reach their ears or you can hardly hope to make an impression; and Lord Verney's physician insisted on his sparing his throat.

So Lord Verney was pleased. Cleve was Lord Verney's throat, and the throat emitted good speeches, and every one knew where the head was. Not that Cleve was deficient; but Cleve had very unusual advantages.

Tom Sedley and Cleve were on rather odd terms now. Cleve kept up externally their old intimacy when they met. But he did not seek him out in those moods which used to call for honest Tom Sedley, when they ran down the river together to Greenwich, when Cleve was lazy, and wanted to hear the news, and say what he liked, and escape from criticism of every kind, and enjoy himself indolently.

For Verney now there was a sense of constraint wherever Tom Sedley was. Even in Tom's manner there was a shyness. Tom had learned a secret which he had not confided to him. He knew he was safe in Tom Sedley's hands. Still he was in his power, and Sedley knew it, and that galled his pride, and made an estrangement.

In the early May, "When winds are sweet though they unruly be," Tom Sedley came down again to Cardyllian. Miss Charity welcomed him with her accustomed emphasis upon the green. How very pretty Agnes looked. But how cold her ways had grown.

He wished she was not so pretty—so *beautiful* in fact. It pained him, and somehow he had grown strange with her; and she was changed, grave and silent rather, and, as it seemed, careless quite whether he was there or not. Although he could never charge her with positive unkindness, much less with rudeness. He wished she would be rude. He would have liked to upbraid her. But her gentle, careless cruelty was a torture that justified no complaint, and admitted no redress.

He could talk volubly and pleasantly enough for hours with Charity, not caring a farthing whether he pleased her or not, and thinking only whether Agnes, who sat silent at her work, liked his stories and was amused by his fun; and went away elated for a whole night and day because a joke of his had made her laugh. Never had Tom felt more proud and triumphant in all his days.

But when Charity left the room to see old Vane Etherage in the study, a strange silence fell upon Tom. You could hear each stitch of her tambour-work. You could hear Tom's breathing. He fancied she might hear the beating of his heart. He was ashamed of his silence. He could have been eloquent had he spoken from that loaded heart. But he dare not, and failing this he must be silent.

By this time Tom was always thinking of Agnes Etherage, and wondering at the perversity of fate. He was in love. He could not cheat himself into any evasion of that truth—a tyrant truth that had ruled him mercilessly; and there was she pining for love of quite another, and bestowing upon him, who disdained it, all the treasure of her heart, while even a look would have been cherished with gratitude by Sedley.

What was the good of his going up every day to Hazelden, Tom Sedley thought, to look at her, and talk to Charity, and laugh, and recount entertaining gossip, and make jokes, and be agreeable, with a heavy and strangely suffering heart, and feel himself every day more and more in love with her, when he knew that the sound of Cleve's footstep as he walked by, thinking of himself, would move her heart more than all Tom Sedley, adoring her, could say in his life-time?

What a fool he was! Before Cleve appeared she was fancy-free, no one else in the field, and his opportunities unlimited. He had lapsed his time, and occasion had spread its wings and flown.

"What beautiful sunshine! What do you say to a walk on the green?" said Tom to

Charity, and listening for a word from Agnes. She raised her pretty eyes, and looked out, but said nothing.

"Yes. I think it would be very nice; and there is no wind. What do *you* say, Agnes?"

"I don't know. I'm lazy to-day, I think, and I have this to finish," said Agnes.

"But you ought to take a walk, Agnes; it would do you good, and Thomas Sedley and I are going for a walk on the green."

"Pray do," pleaded Tom timidly.

Agnes smiled and shook her head, looking out of the window, and, making no other answer, resumed her work.

"You are *very* obstinate," remarked Charity.

"Yes, and lazy, like the donkeys on the green, where you are going; but you don't want me particularly—I mean *you*, Charrie—and Mr. Sedley, I know, will excuse me, for I really feel that it would tire me to-day. It would tire me to death," said Agnes, winding up with an emphasis.

"Well, *I'll* go and put on my things, and if you *like* to come you *can* come, and if you don't you can stay where you are. But I wish you would not be a fool. It is a beautiful day, and nothing on earth to prevent you."

"I don't like the idea of a walk to-day. I know I should feel tired immediately, and have to bring you back again, and I've really grown interested in this little bit of work, and I feel as if I must finish it to-day."

"You *are* such a goose, Agnes," said Charity, marching out of the room.

Tom remained there standing, his hat in his hands, looking out of the window—longing to speak, his heart being full, yet not knowing how to begin, or how to go on if he had begun.

Agnes worked on diligently, and looked out from the window at her side over the shorn grass and flower-beds, through the old trees in the foreground—over the tops of the sloping forest, with the background of the grand Welsh mountains, and a glimpse of the estuary, here and there, seen through the leaves, stretching in dim gold and gray.

"You like that particular window," said Tom, making a wonderful effort; "I mean, why do you like always to sit there?" He spoke in as careless a way as he could, looking still out of his window, which commanded a different view.

"This window! oh, my frame stands here always, and when one is accustomed to a particular place, it puts one out to change."

Then Agnes dropped her pretty eyes again to her worsted, and worked and hummed very faintly a little air, and Tom's heart swelled within him, and he hummed as faintly the same gay air.

"I thought perhaps you liked that view?" said Tom Sedley arresting the music.

She looked out again—

"Well, it's very pretty."

"The best from these windows; some people think, I believe, the prettiest view you have," said Tom, gathering force, "the water is always so pretty."

"Yes, the water," she assented listlessly.

"Quite a romantic view," continued Sedley a little bitterly.

"Yes, every pretty view is romantic," she acquiesced, looking out for a moment again. "If one knew exactly what *romantic* means—it's a word we use so often, and so vaguely."

"And can't you define it, Agnes?"

"Define it? I really don't think I could."

"Well, that does surprise me."

"You are so much more clever than I, of course it does."

"No, quite the contrary; you are clever—I'm serious, I assure you—and I'm a dull fellow, and I know it quite well—*I* can't define it; but *that* doesn't surprise me."

"Then we are both in the same case; but I won't allow its stupidity—the idea is not quite definable, and that is the real difficulty. You can't describe the perfume of a violet, but you know it quite well, and I really think flowers a more interesting subject than romance."

"Oh, really! not, surely, than the romance of *that* view. It *is* so romantic!"

"You seem quite in love with it," said she, with a little laugh, and began again with a grave face to stitch in the glory of her saint in celestial yellow worsted.

"The water—yes—and the old trees of Ware, and just that tower at the angle of the house."

Agnes just glanced through her window, but said nothing.

"I think," said Sedley, "if *I* were peopling this scene, you know, I should put my hero in that Castle of Ware—that is, if I could invent a romance, which, of course, I couldn't." He spoke with a meaning, I think.

"Why should there be heroes in romances?" asked Miss Agnes, looking nevertheless towards Ware, with her hand and the needle resting idly upon the frame. "Don't you think a romance ought to resemble reality a little; and do you ever find such a monster as a hero in the world? *I* don't expect to see one, I know," and she laughed again, but Tom thought, a little bitterly, and applied once more diligently to her work, and hummed a few bars of her little air again.

And Tom, standing now in the middle of the room, leaning on the back of a chair, by way of looking still upon the landscape which they had been discussing, was really looking, unobserved, on her, and thinking that there was not in all the world so pretty a creature.

Charity opened the door, equipped for the walk, and bearing an alpaca umbrella such as few gentlemen would like to walk with in Mayfair.

"Well, you won't come, I see. I think you are very obstinate. Come, Thomas Sedley. Good-bye, Agnes;" and with these words the worthy girl led forth my friend Tom, and as

they passed the corner of the house, he saw Agnes standing in the window, looking out sadly, with her finger-tips against the pane.

"She's lonely, poor little thing!" thought he, with a pang. "Why wouldn't she come? Listlessness—apathy, I suppose. How selfish and odious any trifling with a girl's affections is;" and then aloud to Charity, walking by her side, he continued, "you have not seen Cleve since the great day of Lord Verney's visit, I suppose?"

"No, nothing of him, and don't desire to see him. He has been the cause of a great deal of suffering, as you see, and I think he has behaved *odiously*. She's very odd; she doesn't choose to confide in me. I don't think it's nice or kind of her, but, of course, it's her own affair; only this is plain to me, that she'll never think of any one else now but Cleve Verney."

"It's an awful pity," said Tom Sedley, quite sincerely.

They were walking down that steep and solitary road, by which Vane Etherage had made his memorable descent a few months since, now in deep shadow under the airy canopy of transparent leaves, and in total silence, except for the sounds, far below, of the little mill-stream struggling among the rocks.

"Don't you know Mr. Cleve Verney pretty well?"

"Intimately—that is, I *did*. I have not lately seen so much of him."

"And do you think, Thomas Sedley, that he will ever come forward?" said blunt Miss Charity.

"Well, I happen to know that Cleve Verney has no idea of any thing of the kind. In fact, I should be deceiving you, if I did not say distinctly that I know he won't."

Tom was going to say he *can't*, but checked himself. However, I think he was not sorry to have an opportunity of testifying to this fact, and putting Cleve Verney quite out of the field of conjecture as a possible candidate.

"Then I must say," said Miss Charity, flushing brightly, "that Mr. Verney is a villain."

From this strong position Tom could not dislodge her, and finding that expostulation involved him in a risk of a similar classification, he abandoned Cleve to his fate.

Up and down the green they walked until Miss Flood espied and arrested Charity Etherage, and carried her off upon a visit of philanthropy in her pony-carriage; and so Tom Sedley transferred his charge to fussy, imperious Miss Flood; and he felt strangely incensed with her, and walked the green, disappointed and bereft. Was not Charity Agnes's sister? While he walked with her he could talk of Agnes. He was still in the halo of Hazelden, and near Agnes. But now he was adrift in the dark. He sat down, looking toward the upland woods that indicated Hazelden, and sighed with a much more real pain than he had ever sighed toward Malory; and he thought evil of meddling Miss Flood, who had carried away his companion. After a time he walked away toward Malory, intending a visit to his friend old Rebecca Mervyn, and thinking all the way of Agnes Etherage.

CHAPTER LII.

MRS. MERVYN'S DREAM.

He found himself, in a little time, under the windows of the steward's house. Old Rebecca Mervyn was seated on the bench beside the door plying her knitting-needles; she raised her eyes on hearing his step.

"Ha, he's come!" she said, lowering her hands to her knees, and fixing her dark wild gaze upon him. "I ought to have known it—so strange a dream must have had a meaning."

"They sometimes have, ma'am, I believe; I hope you are pretty well, Mrs. Mervyn."

"No, sir, I am not well."

"Very sorry, very sorry, indeed, ma'am," said Tom Sedley. "I've often thought this must be a very damp, unhealthy place—too much crowded up with trees; they say nothing is more trying to health. You'd be much better, I'm sure, anywhere else."

"Nowhere else; my next move shall be my last. I care not how soon, sir."

"Pray don't give way to low spirits; you really mustn't," said Tom.

"Tell me what it is, sir; for I know you have come to tell me something."

"No, I assure you; merely to ask you how you are, and whether I can be of any use."

"Oh! sir; what use?—*no*.

"Do you wish me to give any message to that fellow Dingwell? Pray make use of me in any way that strikes you. I hear he is on the point of leaving England again."

"I'm glad of it," exclaimed the old lady. "Why do I say so? I'm glad of nothing; but I'm sure it is better. What business could he and Mr. Larkin and that Jew have with my child, who, thank God, is in heaven, and out of the reach of their hands, *evil* hands, I dare say."

"So I rather think, also, ma'am; and Mr. Larkin tried, did he?"

"Larkin;—yes, that was the name. He came here, sir, about the time I saw you; and he talked a great deal about my poor little child. It is dead, you know, but I did not tell him so. I promised Lady Verney I'd tell nothing to strangers—they all grow angry then. Mr. Larkin was angry, I think. But I do not speak—and you advised me to be silent—and though he said he was their lawyer, I would not answer a word."

"I have no doubt you acted wisely, Mrs. Mervyn, you can not be too cautious in holding any communication with such people."

"I'd tell you, sir—if I dare; but I've prom-

ised, and I *daren't*. Till old Lady Verney's gone, I daren't. I know nothing of law-papers —my poor head! How should I? And she could not half understand them. So I promised. *You* would understand them. Time enough—time enough."

"I should be only too happy—whenever you please," said Tom.

"And, you, sir, have come to tell me something; what is it?"

"I assure you I have nothing particularly to say; I merely called to inquire how you are."

"Nothing more needless, sir; how can a poor lonely old woman be, whose last hope has gone out and left her alone in the wilderness? For twenty years—more, *more* than twenty—I have been watching, day and night; and now, sir, I look at the sea no more. I will never see those headlands again. I sit here, sir, from day to day, thinking; and, oh, dear, I wish it was all over."

"Any time you should want me, I should be only too happy, and this is my address."

"And you have nothing to tell me?"

"No, ma'am, nothing more than I said."

"It was wonderful: I dreamed last night I was looking toward Pendillion, watching as I used; the moon was above the mountain, and I was standing by the water, so that the sea came up to my feet, and I saw a speck of white far away, and something told me it was his sail at last, and nearer and nearer, very fast it came; and I walked out to meet it, in the shallow water, with my arms stretched to meet it, and when it came very near I saw it was Arthur himself coming upright in his shroud, his feet on the water, and with his feet, hands, and face as white as snow, and his arms stretched to meet mine; and I felt I was going to die; and I covered my eyes with my hands, praying to God to receive me, expecting his touch; and I heard the rush of the water about his feet, and a voice—it was yours, not his—said, 'Look at me,' and I did look, and saw you, and you looked like a man that had been drowned—your face as white as his, and your clothes dripping, and sand in your hair; and I stepped back, saying, 'My God! how have you come here?' and you said, 'Listen, I have great news to tell you;' and I waked with a shock. I don't believe in dreams more I believe than other people, but this troubles me still."

"Well, thank God, I have had no accident by land or by water," said Tom Sedley, smiling in spite of himself at the awful figure he cut in the old lady's vision; "and I have no news to tell, and I think it will puzzle those Jews and lawyers to draw me into their business, whatever it is. I don't like that sort of people; you need never be afraid of me, ma'am, I detest them."

"Afraid of *you*, sir!—Oh no. You have been very kind. See, this view here is under the branches; you can't see the water from this, only those dark paths in the wood; and I walk round sometimes through that hollow and on by the low road toward Cardyllian in the evening, when no one is stirring, just to the ash-tree, from which you can see the old church and the church-yard; and oh! sir, I wish I were lying there."

"You must not be talking in that melancholy way, ma'am," said Tom, kindly;" "I'll come and see you again if you allow me; I think you are a great deal too lonely here; you ought to go out in a boat, ma'am, and take a drive now and then, and just rattle about a little, and you can't think how much good it would do you; and—I must go—and I hope I shall find you a great deal better when I come back"—and with these words he took his leave, and as he walked along that low narrow road that leads by the inland track to Cardyllian, of which old Rebecca Mervyn spoke, whom should he encounter but Miss Charity coming down the hill at a brisk pace with Miss Flood, in that lady's pony-carriage. Smiling, hat in hand, he got himself well against the wall to let them pass; but the ladies drew up, and Miss Charity had a message to send home, if he, Thomas Sedley, would be so good as to call at Jones's they would find a messenger, merely to tell Agnes that she was going to dine with Miss Flood, and would not be home till seven o'clock.

So Tom Sedley undertook it; smiled and bowed his adieus, and then walked faster toward the town, and instead of walking direct to Mrs. Jones, sauntered for a while on the green, and bethought him what mistakes such messengers as Mrs. Jones could provide, sometimes make, and so resolved himself to be Miss Charity's Mercury.

Sedley felt happier, with an odd kind of excited and unmeaning happiness, as he walked up the embowed steep toward Hazelden, than he had felt an hour or two before while walking down it. When he reached the little flowery platform of closely mown grass, on which stands the pretty house of Hazelden, he closed the iron gate gently, and looked toward the drawing-room windows that reach the grass, and felt a foolish flutter at his heart as he saw that the frame stood in Agnes's window without its mistress.

"Reading, now, I suppose," whispered Tom, as if he feared to disturb her. "She has changed her place, and she is reading;" and he began to speculate whether she sat on the ottoman or on the sofa, or in the cushioned arm-chair, with her novel in her hands. But his sidelong glances could not penetrate the panes, which returned only reflections of the sky or black shadow, excepting of the one object, the deserted frame which stood close to their surface.

There was a time, not long ago either, when Tom Sedley would have run across the grass to the drawing-room windows, and had he seen Agnes within would have made a semi-burglarious entry through one of them. But there had come of late, on a sudden, a sort of formality in his relations with Agnes; and so he walked round by the hall-door, and found the

rawing-rooms empty, and touching the bell, earned that Miss Agnes had gone out for a valk.

"I've a message to give her from Miss Chariy; have you any idea which way she went?"

He found himself making excuse to the servnt for his inquiry. A short time since he ould have asked quite frankly where she was, ithout dreaming of a reason; but now had rown, as I say, a reserve, which has always the ore harmless incidents of guilt. He was aprehensive of suspicion; he was shy even of this ld servant, and was encountering this inquiry y an explanation of his motives.

"I saw her go by the beech walk, sir," said he man.

"Oh! thanks; very good."

And he crossed the grass, and entered the eech walk, which is broad and straight, with owering files of beech at each side, and a thick creen of underwood and evergreens, and turng the screen of rhodendrons at the entrance f the walk, he found himself quite close to Agies, who was walking toward him.

She stopped. He fancied she changed color; ad she mistaken him for some one else?

"Well, Agnes, I see the sun and the flowers revailed, though we couldn't; and I am glad, t all events, that you have had a little walk."

"Oh! yes, after all, I really couldn't resist; nd is Charity coming?"

"No, you are not to expect her till tea-time. She's gone with Miss Flood somewhere, and she ent me to tell you."

"Oh! thanks;" and Agnes hesitated, lookng toward home, as if she intended returning.

"You may as well walk once more up and lown; it does look so jolly; doesn't it?" said Tom; "pray do, Agnes."

"Well, yes, once more, I will; but that is all, or I really am a little tired."

They set out in silence, and Tom, with a great effort, said—

"I wonder, Agnes, you seem so cold, I mean o unfriendly with me, I think you do; and you nust be quite aware of it; you must, *indeed*, Agnes. I *think* if you knew half the pain you are giving me—I really do—that you wouldn't."

The speech was very inartificial, but it had he merit of going direct to the point, and Miss Agnes began—

"I haven't been at all unfriendly."

"Oh! but you *have*—*indeed* you have—you are quite *changed*. And I don't know what I have done—I wish you'd tell me—to deserve it; because—even if there was—another—any thing —no matter what—I'm an old friend, and I think it's very unkind; *you* don't perceive it, perhaps, but you are awfully changed."

Agnes laughed a very little, and she answered, looking down on the walk before her, as Sedley thought, with a very pretty blush, and I believe there was—

"It is a very serious accusation, and I don't deserve it. No, indeed, and even if it were true, it rather surprises me that it should in the least interest you; because we down here have seen so little of you that we might very reasonably suspect that you had begun to forget us."

"Well, I *have* been an *awful* fool, it is quite true, and you have punished me, not more than I deserve; but I think you might have remembered that you had not on earth a better friend —I mean a more earnest one—particularly *you*, Agnes, than I."

"I really don't know what I have done," pleaded she, with another little laugh.

"I was here, you know, as intimate almost as a brother. I don't say, of course, there are not many things that I had no right to expect to hear any thing about; but if I had, and been thought worthy of confidence, I would at all events have spoken honestly. But—may I speak quite frankly, Agnes?—you won't be offended, will you?"

"No; I shan't—I'm quite sure."

"Well, it was only this—you *are* changed, Agnes, you know you are. Just this moment, for instance, you were going home, only because *I* came here, and you fancied I might join you in your walk; and this change began when Cleve Verney was down here staying at Ware, and used to walk with you on the green."

Agnes stopped short at these words, and drew back a step, looking at Sedley with an angry surprise.

"I don't understand you—I'm certain I don't. I can't conceive what you mean," she said.

Sedley paused in equal surprise.

"I—I beg pardon; I'm awfully sorry—you'll never know *how* sorry—if I have said any thing to vex you; but I *did* think it was some influence, or something connected with that time."

"I really don't pretend to understand you," said Agnes, coldly, with eyes, however, that gleamed resentfully. "I do recollect perfectly Mr. Cleve Verney's walking half a dozen times with Charity and me upon the green, but what that can possibly have to do with your fancied wrongs, I can not imagine; I fancied you were a friend of Mr. Verney's."

"So I was—so I am; but no such friend as I am of yours—*your* friend, Agnes. There's no use in saying it; but, Agnes, I'd die for you—I would indeed."

"I'm not likely to ask you, Mr. Sedley; but I thought it very strange, your coming so very seldom to inquire for papa, when he was so poorly last year, when you were at Cardyllian. *He* did not seem to mind it; but considering as you say how much you once used to be here, it did strike me as very *rude*—I may as well say what I really thought—not only unkind but rude. So that if there has been any change, you need not look to other people for the cause of it."

"If you knew how I blame myself for that, I think, bad as it was, you'd forgive me."

"I think it showed that you did not very much care what became of us."

"Oh! Agnes, you did not think that—you never thought it. Unless *you* are happy, I *can't*

be happy, nor even then unless I think you have forgiven me; and I think if I could be sure you liked me ever so little, even in the old way, I should be one of the happiest people in the world. I don't make any excuses—I was the stupidest fool on earth—I only throw myself on your mercy, and ask you to forgive me."

"I've nothing to forgive," said Agnes, with a cruel little laugh.

"Well, well—*forget*—oh, *do!* and shake hands like your old self. You have no idea how miserable I have been."

With a very beautiful blush and a smile—a little shy, and so gratified—and a little silvery laugh, Agnes relented, and did give her hand to Tom Sedley.

"Oh, Agnes! Oh, Agnes! I'm so happy and so grateful! Oh, Agnes, you won't take it away—just for a moment."

She plucked her hand to remove it, for Tom was exceeding his privilege, and kissing it.

"*Now* we are friends," said Agnes, laughing.

"Are we *quite* friends?"

"Yes, quite."

"You must not take your hand away—one moment more. Oh, Agnes, I can never tell you—never how I love you. You are my darling, Agnes, and I can't live without you."

Agnes said something—was it reproof or repulse? He only knew that the tones were sad and gentle, and that she was drawing her hand away.

"Oh, darling, I adore you! You would not make me miserable for life. There is nothing I won't do—nothing I won't try—if you'll only say you like me—ever so little. Do sit down here, just for a moment"—there was a rustic seat beside them—"only for a moment."

She did sit down, and he beside her. That "moment" of Tom Sedley's grew as such moments will, like the bean that Jack sowed in his garden, till it reached Titantia knows whither. I know that Miss Charity on her return surprised it still growing.

"I made the tea, Agnes, fancying you were in your room. I've had such a search for you. I really think you might have told Edward where you were going. Will you drink tea with us, Thomas Sedley, this evening? though I am afraid you'll find it perfectly cold."

If Miss Charity had been either suspicious or romantic she would have seen by a glance at the young people's faces what had happened; but being neither, and quite pre-occupied with her theory about Cleve Verney, and having never dreamed of Tom Sedley as possibly making his *début* at Hazelden in the character of a lover—she brought her prisoners home, with only a vague sense now and then that there was either something a little odd in their manner or in her own perceptions, and she remarked, looking a little curiously at Tom, in reference to some query of hers—

"I've asked you that question twice without an answer, and now you say something totally unmeaning!"

CHAPTER LIII.

"WILL *you* tell her?" whispered Sedley to Agnes.

"Oh, no. Do *you*," she entreated.

They both looked at Charity, who was preparing the little dog's supper of bread and milk in a saucer.

"I'll go in and see papa, and you shall speak to her," said Agnes.

Which Tom Sedley did, so much to her amazement that she set the saucer down on the table beside her, and listened, and conversed for half an hour, and the poodle's screams, and wild jumping and clawing at her elbow, at last reminded her that he had been quite forgotten.

So while its mistress was apologizing earnestly to poor Bijou, and superintending his attentions to the bread and milk now placed upon the floor, in came Agnes, and up got Charity, and kissed her with a frank beaming smile, and said—

"I'm *excessively* glad, Agnes. I was always *so* fond of Thomas Sedley; and I wonder we never thought of it before.

They were all holding hands in a ring by this time.

"And what do you think Mr. Etherage will say?" inquired Tom.

"Papa! why of *course* he will be *delighted*," said Miss Charity. "He likes you *extremely*."

"But you know, Agnes might do so much better. She's such a treasure, there's no one that would not be proud of her, and no one could help falling in love with her, and the Ad—I mean Mr. Etherage, may think me so presumptuous, and, you know, he may think me quite too poor."

"If you mean to say that papa would object to you because you have only four hundred a year, you think most meanly of him. I know I should not like to be connected with any body that I thought so meanly of, because that kind of thing I look upon as really *wicked;* and I should be sorry to think papa was wicked. I'll go in and tell him all that has happened this moment."

In an awful suspense, pretty Agnes and Tom Sedley, with her hand in both his, stood side by side, looking earnestly at the double door which separated them from this conference.

In a few minutes they heard Vane Etherage's voice raised to a pitch of testy bluster, and then Miss Charity's rejoinder with shrill emphasis.

"Oh! gracious goodness! he's very angry. What shall we do?" exclaimed poor little Agnes, in wild helplessness.

"I *knew* it—I *knew* it—I *said* how it would be—he can't endure the idea, he thinks it such audacity. I knew he must, and I really think I shall lose my reason. I could not—I *could* not live. Oh! Agnes, I *couldn't* if he prevents it."

In came Miss Charity, very red and angry.

"He's just in one of his odd tempers. I don't mind one *word* he says to-night. He'll be quite different, you'll *see*, in the morning.

Ve'll sit up here, and have a good talk about it, ll it's time for you to go; and you'll see I'm uite right. I'm *surprised*," she continued, with everity, "at his talking as he did to-night. I onsider it quite worldly and *wicked!* But I ontented myself with telling him that he did ot think one word of what he said, and that e *knew* he didn't, and that he'd tell me so in e morning; and instead of feeling it, as I ought he would, he said something intolerably ide."

Old Etherage, about an hour later, when they ere all in animated discussion, shuffled to the oor, and put in his head, and looked surprised see Tom, who looked alarmed to see him. nd the old gentleman bid them all a glower- g good-night, and shortly after they heard him heeled away to his bedroom, and were re- eved.

They sat up awfully late, and the old servant ho poked into the room oftener than he was anted toward the close of their sitting, looked an and bewildered with drowsiness; and at st Charity, struck by the ghastly resignation his countenance, glanced at the French clock er the chimney-piece, and ejaculated—

"Why, merciful goodness! is it possible? quarter to one! It *can't possibly be.* Thomas edley, *will* you look at your watch, and tell us hat o'clock it really is?"

His watch corroborated the French clock.

"*If* papa heard this! I really can't the least *nceive* how it happened. I did not think it uld have been *eleven.* Well, it is *undoubtedly* e *oddest* thing that *ever* happened in this ouse!"

In the morning between ten and eleven, when om Sedley appeared again at the drawing-room ndows, he learned from Charity, in her own aphatic style of narration, what had since ken place, which was not a great deal, but ll was uncomfortably ambiguous.

She had visited her father at his breakfast in e study, and promptly introduced the subject Tom Sedley, and he broke into this line of servation—

"I'd like to know what the deuce Tom Sed- means by talking of business to girls. I'd e to know it. I say, if he has any thing to y, why doesn't he *say* it, that's what *I* say. ere I *am.* What has he to *say.* I don't ob- ct to hear him, be it sense or be it nonsense out with it! That's my maxim; and be it nse or be it nonsense, I won't have it at second nd. That's *my* idea."

Acting upon this, Miss Charity insisted that ought to see Mr. Etherage; and with a beat- g heart, he knocked at the study door, and ked an audience.

"Come in," exclaimed the resonant voice of e admiral. And Tom Sedley obeyed.

The admiral extended his hand, and greeted om kindly, but gravely.

"Fine day, Mr. Sedley; very fine, sir. It's odd thing, Tom Sedley, but there's more ally fine weather up here at Hazelden, than anywhere else in Wales. More sunshine, and a *deal* less rain. You'd hardly believe, for you'd fancy on this elevated ground we should naturally have *more* rain, but it's *less*, by several inches, than anywhere else in Wales! And there's next to no damp—the hygrometer tells *that.* And a curious thing, you'll have a southerly wind up here when it's blowing from the east on the estuary. You can see it, by Jove! Now just look out of that window; did you ever see such sunshine as that? There's a clearness in the air up here—at the *other* side, if you go up, you get *mist*—but there's something about it here that I would not change for any place in the world."

You may be sure Tom did not dispute any of these points.

"By Jove, Tom Sedley, it would be a glorious day for a sail round the point of Penruthyn. I'd have been down with the tide, sir, this morning if I had been as I was ten years ago; but a fellow doesn't like to be lifted into his yacht, and the girls did not care for sailing; so I sold her. There wasn't such a boat—take her for every thing—in the *world—never!*"

"The *Feather;* wasn't she, sir?" said Tom.

"The *Feather!* that she was, sir. A name pretty well known, I venture to think. Yes, the *Feather* was her name."

"I *have*, sir; yes, indeed, often heard her spoken of," said Tom, who had heard one or two of the boatmen of Cardyllian mention her with a guarded sort of commendation. I never could learn, indeed, that there was any thing very remarkable about the boat; but Tom would just then have backed any assertion of the honest admiral's with a loyal alacrity, bordering, I am afraid, upon unscrupulousness.

"There are the girls going out with their trowels, going to poke among those flowers; and certainly, I'll do them the justice to say, their garden prospers. I don't see such flowers *anywhere;* do you?"

"*Nowhere!*" said Tom, with enthusiasm.

"Ay, there they're at it—grubbing and raking. And by the bye, Tom, what was that? Sit down for a minute."

Tom felt as if he was going to choke, but he sat down.

"What was that—some nonsense Charity was telling me last night?"

Thus invited, poor Sedley, with many hesitations, and wanderings, and falterings, did get through his romantic story. And Mr. Etherage did not look pleased by the recital; on the contrary, he carried his head unusually high, and looked hot and minatory, but he did not explode. He continued looking on the opposite wall, as he had done as if he were eyeing a battle there, and he cleared his voice.

"As I understand it, sir, there's not an income to make it at all prudent. I don't want my girls to marry; I should, in fact, miss them very much; but if they do, there ought to be a settlement, don't you see? there should be a settlement, for *I* can't do so much for them as

people suppose. The property is settled, and the greater part goes to my grand-nephew after me; and I've invested, as you know, all my stock and money in the quarry at Llanrwyd; and if she married you, she should live in London the greater part of the year. And I don't see how you could get on upon what you both have; I don't, sir. And I must say, I think you ought to have spoken to me before paying your addresses, sir. I don't think that's unreasonable; on the contrary, I think it *reasonable, perfectly* so, and only right and fair. And I must go farther, sir; I must say this, I don't see, sir, without a proper competence, what pretensions you had to address my child."

"None, sir; none in the world, Mr. Etherage. I know, sir, I've been thinking of my presumption ever since. I betrayed myself into it, sir; it was a kind of surprise. If I had reflected I should have come to you, sir; but—but you have no idea, sir, how I adore her." Tom's eye wandered after her through the window, among the flowers. "Or what it would be to me to—to have to—"

Tom Sedley faltered, and bit his lip, and started up quickly and looked at an engraving of old Etherage's frigate, which hung on the study wall.

He looked at it for some time steadfastly. Never was man so affected by the portrait of a frigate, you would have thought. Vane Etherage saw him dry his eyes stealthily two or three times, and the old gentleman coughed a little, and looked out of the window, and would have got up, if he could, and stood close to it.

"It's a beautiful day, certainly; wind coming round a bit to the south, though—south by east; that's always a squally wind with us; and—and—I assure you I like you, Tom; upon my honor I do, Tom Sedley—better, sir, than any young fellow I know. I think I *do*—I am *sure*, in fact, I do. But this thing—it wouldn't do—it really wouldn't; no, Tom Sedley, it wouldn't *do;* if you reflect you'll see it. But, of course, you may get on in the world. Rome wasn't built in a day."

"It's very kind of you, sir; but the time's so long, and so many chances," said Sedley, with a sigh like a sob; "and when I go away, sir, the sooner I die, the happier for me."

Tom turned again quickly toward the frigate—the *Vulcan*—and old Etherage looked out of the window once more, and up at the clouds.

"Yes," said the admiral, "it will; we shall have it from south by east. And, d'ye hear, Tom Sedley? I—I've been thinking there's no need to make any fuss about this—this thing; just let it be as if you had never said a word about it, do you mind, and come here just as usual. Let us put it out of our heads; and if you find matters improve, and still wish it, there's nothing to prevent your speaking to me; only Agnes is perfectly free, you understand, and you are not to make any change in your demeanor—ha—a—or—I mean to be more with my daughters, or any thing *marked*, you understand. People begin to talk here, you know, in the club-house, on very slight grounds; and—and—you understand now; and there mustn't be any nonsense; and I like you, sir—I like you, Thomas Sedley; I do—I do, indeed, sir."

And old Vane Etherage gave him a very friendly shake by the hand, and Tom thanked him gratefully, and went away reprieved, and took a walk with the girls, and told them as they expressed it, *every thing;* and Vane Etherage thought it incumbent on him to soften matters a little by asking him to dinner; and Tom accepted; and when they broke up after tea there was another mistake discovered about the hour, and Miss Charity most emphatically announced that it was *perfectly unaccountable*, and must *never* occur again; and I hope, for the sake of the venerable man who sat up, resigned and affronted, to secure the hall-door and put out the lamps after the party had broken up, that these irregular hours were kept no more at Elzelden.

CHAPTER LIV.

ARCADIAN LILAC, AND LABURNUM AND RED BRICK.

As time proceeds, renewal and decay, its twin principles of mutation, being everywhere, and necessarily active, apply to the moral as well as to the material world. Affections displace and succeed one another. The most beautiful are often the first to die. Characteristics in their beginning, minute and unsubstantial as the fairy brood that people the woodland air, enlarge and materialize till they usurp the dominion of the whole man, and the people and the world are changed.

Sir Booth Fanshawe is away at Paris just now, engaged in a great negotiation, which is to bring order out of chaos, and inform him at last what he is really worth *per annum*. Margaret and her cousin, Miss Sheckleton, have re-visited England; their Norman retreat is untenanted for the present.

With the sorrow of a great concealment upon her, with other sorrows that she does not tell, Margaret looks sad and pale.

In a small old suburban house, that stands alone, with a rural affectation, on a little patch of shorn grass, embowered in lilacs and laburnums, and built of a deep vermilion brick, the residence of these ladies is established.

It is a summer evening, and a beautiful little boy, more than a year old, is sprawling, and rolling, and babbling, and laughing on the grass upon his back. Margaret is seated on the grass beside him, prattles and laughs with him, and rolls him about, delighted, and adoring her little idol.

Old Anne Sheckleton, sitting on the bench, smiling happily, under the window, which is clustered round with roses, contributes her quota of nonsense to the prattle.

In the midst of this comes a ring at the bell.

n the jessamine-covered wall, and a tidy little naid runs out to the green door, opens it, and n steps Cleve Verney.

Margaret is on her feet in a moment, with he light of a different love, something of the ld romance, in the glad surprise, "Oh, darling, it is you!" and her arms are about his eck, and he stoops and kisses her fondly, and n his face for a moment is reflected the glory f that delighted smile.

"Yes, darling. Are you better?"

"Oh, yes—ever so much; I'm always well hen you are here; and look, see our poor litte darling."

"So he is."

"We have had such fun with him—haven't ve, Anne? I'm sure he'll be so like you."

"Is that in his favor, Cousin Anne?" asked Cleve, taking the old lady's hand.

"Why should it not?" said she, gayly.

"A question—well, I take the benefit of the oubt," laughed Cleve. "No, darling," he said o Margaret, "you mustn't sit on the grass; it s damp; you'll sit beside our Cousin Anne, and e prudent."

So he instead sat down on the grass, and alked with them, and prattled and romped with he baby by turns, until the nurse came out to onvey him to the nursery, and he was handed ound to say what passes for "Good-night," nd give his tiny paw to each in turn.

"You look tired, Cleve, darling."

"So I am, my Guido; can we have a cup f tea?"

"Oh, yes. I'll get it in a moment," said ctive Anne Sheckleton.

"It's too bad disturbing you," said Cleve.

"No trouble in the world," said Anne, who ished to allow them a word together; besides, must kiss baby in his bed."

"Yes, darling, I *am* tired," said Cleve, taking is place beside her, so soon as old Anne heckleton was gone. "That old man—"

"Lord Verney, do you mean?"

"Yes, he has begun plaguing me again.'

"What is it about, darling?"

"Oh, fifty things; he thinks among others ought to marry," said Cleve, with a dreary ugh.

"Oh! I thought he had given up that," she id, with a smile that was very pale.

"So he did for a time; but I think he's ossessed. If he happens to take up an idea at's likely to annoy other people, he never lets drop till he teases them half to death. He inks I should gain *money* and political conection, and I don't know what all, and I'm ite tired of the whole thing. What a vulgar ttle box this is—isn't it, darling? I almost ish you were back again in that place in rance."

"But I can see you so much oftener here, leve," pleaded Margaret, softly, with a very id look.

"And where's the good of seeing me here, ear Margaret? Just consider, I always come to you anxious; there's always a risk, besides, of discovery.

"Where you are is to me a paradise."

"Oh, darling, do *not* talk rubbish. This vulgar, odious little place! No place can be *either—quite*, of course, where *you* are. But you must see what it is—a paradise"—and he laughed peevishly—"of red brick, and lilacs, and laburnums—a paradise for old Mr. Dowlas, the tallow-chandler."

There was a little tremor in Margaret's lip, and the water stood in her large eyes; her hand was, as it were, on the coffin-edge; she was looking down in the face of a dead romance.

"Now, you really must not shed tears over *that* speech. You are too much given to weeping, Margaret. What have I said to vex you? It merely amounts to this, that we live just now in the future; we can't well deny *that*, darling. But the time will come at last, and my queen enjoy her own."

And so saying he kissed her, and told her to be a good little girl; and from the window Miss Sheckleton handed them tea, and then she ran up to the nursery.

"You *do* look very tired, Cleve," said Margaret, looking into his anxious face.

"I *am* tired, darling," he said, with just a degree of impatience in his tone; "I said so—horribly tired."

"I wish so much you were out of the House of Commons."

"Now, my wise little woman is talking of what she doesn't understand—not the least; besides, what would you have me turn to? I should be totally without resource and pursuit—don't you see? We must be reasonable. No, it is not that in the least that tires me, but I'm really overwhelmed with anxieties, and worried by my uncle, who wants me to marry, and thinks I can marry very well, and whom I like—that's all."

"I sometimes think, Cleve, I've spoiled your fortunes," with a great sigh said Margaret.

"Now, where's the good of saying that, my little woman? I'm only talking of my uncle's teasing me, and wishing he'd let us both alone."

Here came a little pause.

"Is that the baby?" said Margaret, raising her head and listening.

"I don't hear our baby or any one else's," said Cleve.

"I fancied I heard it cry, but it wasn't."

"You must think of me more, and of that child less, darling—you must, indeed," said Cleve, a little sourly.

I think the poor heart was pleased, thinking this jealousy; but I fear it was rather a splenetic impulse of selfishness, and that the baby was, in his eyes, a bore pretty often.

"Does the House sit to-night, Cleve, darling?"

"Does it, indeed? Why, it's sitting now. We are to have the second reading of the West India Bill on to-night, and I must be there—yes—in an hour"—he was glancing at his watch

—"and heaven knows at what hour in the morning we shall get away."

And just at this moment old Anne Sheckleton joined them. "She's coming with more tea," she said, as the maid emerged with a little tray, "and we'll place our cups on the window-stone when we don't want them. Now, Mr. Verney, is not this a charming little spot just at this light?"

"I almost think it is," said Cleve, relenting. The golden light of evening was touching the formal poplars, and the other trees, and bringing out the wrinkles of the old bricks duskily in its flaming glow.

"Yes, just for about fifteen minutes in the twenty-four hours, when the weather is particularly favorable, it *has* a sort of Dutch picturesqueness; but on the whole, it is not the sort of cottage that I would choose for a permanent dove-cote. I should fear lest my pigeons should choke with dust."

"No, there's no dust here; it is the quietest, most sylvan little lane in the world."

"Which is a wide place," said Cleve. "Well, with smoke then."

"Nor smoke either."

"But I forgot, love does not die of smoke, or of any thing else," said Cleve.

"No, of course, love is eternal," said Margaret.

"Just so; the King never dies. *Les roix meurent-ils? Quelquefoi, madame.* Alas, theory and fact conflict. Love is eternal in the abstract; but nothing is more mortal than a particular love," said Cleve.

"If you think so, I wonder you ever wished to marry," said Margaret, and a faint tinge flushed her cheeks.

"I thought so, and yet I did wish to marry," said Cleve. "It is perishable, but I can't live without it," and he patted her cheek, and laughed a rather cold little laugh.

"No, love never dies," said Margaret, with a gleam of her old fierce spirit. "But perhaps it may be killed."

"It is terrible to kill any thing," said Cleve.

"To kill love," she answered, "is the worst murder of all."

"A veritable murder," he acquiesced; "once killed, it never revives."

"You like talking awfully, as if I might lose your love," said she, haughtily; "as if, were I to vex you, you never could forgive."

"Forgiveness has nothing to do with it, my poor little woman. I no more called my love into being than I did myself; and should it die, either naturally or violently, I could no more recall it to life, than I could Cleopatra or Napoleon Bonaparte. It is a principle, don't you see? that comes as direct as life from heaven. We can't create it, we can't restore it; and really about love, it is worse than mortal, because, as I said, I am sure it has *no* resurrection—no, it has no resurrection."

"That seems to me a reason," she said, fixing her large eyes upon him with a wild resentment, "why you should cherish it very much while it lives."

"And *don't* I, darling?" he said, placing his arms round her neck, and drawing her fondly to his breast, and in the thrill of that momentary effusion was something of the old feeling; when to lose her would have been despair, to gain her heaven, and it seemed as if the scent of the woods of Malory, and of the soft sea-breeze, was around them for a moment.

And now he is gone, away to that very House—lost to her, given up to his ambition, which seems more and more to absorb him and she remains smiling on their beautiful little baby, with a great misgiving at her heart, for four-and-twenty hours more.

As Cleve went into the House, he met old Colonel Thongs, sometime whip of the "cats."

"You've heard about old Snowdon?"

"No."

"In the Cabinet, by Jove."

"Really?"

"Fact. Ask your uncle."

"By Jove, it *is* very unlooked-for; no one thought of him; but I dare say he'll do very well."

"We'll soon try that."

It *was* a *very* odd appointment. But Lord Snowdon was gazetted; a dull man, but laborious; a man who had held minor offices at different periods of his life, and was presumed to have a competent knowledge of affairs. A dull man, owing all to his dullness, quite below many, and selected as a negative compromise for the vacant seat in the Cabinet, for which two zealous and brilliant competitors were contending.

"I see it all," thought Cleve; "that's the reason why Caroline Oldys and Lady Wimbledon are to be at Ware this autumn, and I'm to be married to the niece of a Cabinet minister."

Cleve sneered, but he felt very uneasy.

CHAPTER LV.

THE TRIUMVIRATE.

That night Lord Verney waited to hear the debate in the Commons—waited for the division—and brought Cleve home with him in his brougham.

He explained to Cleve on the way how much better the debate might have been. He sometimes half regretted his seat in the Commons; there were so many things unsaid that ought to have been said, and so many things said that had better have been omitted. *And at last he* remarked—

"Your uncle Arthur, my unfortunate brother, had a great natural talent for speaking. It's a talent of the Verneys—about it. We all have it; and *you* have got it also; it is a gift of very decided importance in debate; it can hardly be overestimated in that respect. Poor Arthur might have done very well, but he didn't, and

he's gone—about it; and I'm very glad, for your own sake, you are cultivating it; and it would be a very great misfortune, I've been thinking, if our family were not to marry, and secure a transmission of those hereditary talents and—and things—and—what's your opinion of Miss Caroline Oldys? I mean, quite frankly, what sort of wife you think she would make."

"Why, to begin with, she's been out a long time; but I believe she's gentle—and foolish; and I believe her mother bullies her."

"I don't know what you call bullying, my good sir; but she appears to me to be a very affectionate mother; and as to her being foolish—about it—I can't perceive it; on the contrary, I've conversed with her a good deal—and things—and I've found her very superior indeed to any young woman I can recollect having talked to. She takes an interest in things which don't interest or—or—interest other young persons; and she likes to be instructed about affairs—and, my dear Cleve, I think where a young person of merit—either rightly or wrongly interpreting what she conceives to be your attentions—becomes decidedly *epris* of you, she ought to be—a—*considered*—her feelings, and things; and I thought I might as well mention my views, and go—about it—straight to the point; and I think you will perceive that it is reasonable, and that's the position—about it; and you know, Cleve, in these circumstances you may reckon upon me to do any thing in reason that may still lie in my power—about it."

"You have always been too kind to me."

"You shall find me so still. Lady Wimbledon takes an interest in you, and Miss Caroline Oldys will, I undertake to say, more and more decidedly as she comes to know you better."

And so saying, Lord Verney leaned back in the brougham as if taking a doze, and after about five minutes of closed eyes and silence he suddenly wakened up and said—

"It is, in fact, it strikes me, high time, Cleve, you should marry—about it—and you must have money, too; you want money, and you shall have it."

"I'm afraid money is not one of *Caroline's* strong points."

"You need not trouble yourself upon that point, sir; if *I'm* satisfied I fancy *you* may. I've quite enough for both, I presume; and—and so, we'll let that matter rest."

And the noble lord let himself rest also, leaning stiffly back with closed eyes, and nodding and swaying silently with the motion of the carriage.

I believe he was only ruminating after his manner in these periods of apparent repose. He opened his eyes again, and remarked—

"I have talked over this affair carefully with Mr. Larkin—a most judicious and worthy person—about it, and you can talk to him, and so on, when he comes to town, and I should rather wish you to do so."

Lord Verney relapsed into silence and the semblance, at least, of slumber.

"So Larkin's at the bottom of it; I knew he was," thought Cleve, with a pang of hatred which augured ill for the future prospects of that good man. "He has made this alliance for the Oldys and Wimbledon faction, and I'm Mr. *Larkin's* parti, and am to settle the management of every thing upon him; and what a judicious diplomatist he is—and how he has put his foot in it. A blundering hypocritical coxcomb—d—n him!"

Then his thoughts wandered away to Larkin, and to his instrument, Mr. Dingwell, "who looks as if he came from the galleys. We have heard nothing of him for a year or more. Among the Greek and Malay scoundrels again, I suppose; the Turks are too good for him."

But Mr. Dingwell had not taken his departure, and was not thinking of any such step *yet*, at least. He had business still on his hands, and a mission unaccomplished.

Still in the same queer lodgings, and more jealously shut up during the day-time than ever, Mr. Dingwell lived his odd life, professing to hate England—certainly in danger there—he yet lingered on for a set purpose, over which he brooded and laughed in his hermitage.

To so chatty a person as Mr. Dingwell solitude for a whole day was irksome. Sarah Rumble was his occasional resource, and when she brought him his cup of black coffee he would make her sit down by the wall, like a servant at prayers, and get from her all the news of the dingy little neighborhood, with a running commentary of his own flighty and savage irony, and he would sometimes entertain her, between the whiffs of his long pipe, with talk of his own, which he was at no pains to adapt to her comprehension, and delivered rather for his own sole entertainment.

"The world, the flesh, and the devil, ma'am. The two first we know pretty well—hey? the other we take for granted. I suppose there *is* somebody of the sort. We are all pigs, ma'am—unclean animals—and this is a sty we live in—slime and abomination. Strong delusion is, unseen, circling in the air. Our ideas of beauty, delights of sense, varieties of intellect—all a most comical and frightful cheat—egad! What fun we must be, ma'am, to the spirits who *have* sight and intellect! I think, ma'am, we're meant for their pantomime—don't you? Our airs, and graces, and dignities, and compliments, and beauties, and dandies—our metal coronets, and lawn sleeves, and whalebone wigs—fun, ma'am, lots of fun! And here we are, a wonderful work of God. Eh? Come, ma'am—a word in your ear—all *putrefaction*—pah! nothing clean but fire, and that makes us roar and vanish—a very odd position we're placed in; hey, ma'am?"

Mr. Dingwell had at first led Sarah Rumble a frightful life, for she kept the door where the children were peremptorily locked, at which he took umbrage and put her on fatigue duty, more than trebling her work by his caprices, and requiting her with his ironies and sneers,

finding fault with every thing, pretending to miss money out of his desk, and every day threatening to invoke Messrs. Levi & Goldshed, and invite an incursion of the police, and showing in his face, his tones—his jeers pointed and envenomed by revenge—that his hatred was active and fiendish.

But Sarah Rumble was resolute. He was not a desirable companion for childhood of either sex, and the battle went on for a considerable time; and poor Sarah in her misery besought Messrs. Levi & Goldshed, with many tears and prayers, that he might depart from her; and Levi looked at Goldshed, and Goldshed at Levi, quite gravely, and Levi winked, and Goldshed nodded, and said, "A bad boy;" and they spake comfortably, and told her they would support her, but Mr. Dingwell must remain her inmate, but they'd take care he should do her no harm.

Mr. Dingwell had a latch-key, which he at first used sparingly or timidly; with time, however, his courage grew, and he was out more or less every night. She used to hear him go out after the little household was in bed, and sometimes she heard him lock the hall-door, and his step on the stairs when the sky was already gray with the dawn.

And gradually finding company such as he affected out-of-doors, I suppose, he did not care so much for the seclusion of his fellow-lodgers, and ceased to resent it almost, and made it up with Sarah Rumble.

And one night, having to go up between one and two for a match-box to the lobby, she encountered Mr. Dingwell coming down. She was dumb with terror, for she did not know him, and took him for a burglar, he being somehow totally changed—she was too confused to recollect exactly, only that he had red hair and whiskers, and looked stouter.

She did not know him the least till he laughed. She was near fainting, and leaned with her shoulder to the corner of the wall; and he said—

"I've to put on these; you keep my secret, mind; you may lose me my life, else."

And he took her by the chin, and gave her a kiss, and then a slap on the cheek that seemed to her harder than play, for her ear tingled with it for an hour after, and she uttered a little cry of fright, and he laughed, and glided out of the hall-door, and listened for the tread of a policeman, and peeped slyly up and down the court; and then, with his cotton umbrella in his hand, walked quietly down the passage and disappeared.

Sarah Rumble feared him all the more for this little rencontre and the shock she had received, for there was a suggestion of something felonious in his disguise. She was, however, a saturnine and silent woman, with few acquaintances, and no fancy for collecting or communicating news. There was a spice of danger, too, in talking of this matter; so she took counsel of the son of Sirach, who says, "If thou hast heard a word, let it die with thee, and, behold, it will not burst thee."

Sarah Rumble kept his secret, and henceforward at such hours kept close when in the deep silence of the night she heard the faint creak of his stealthy shoe upon the stair, and avoided him as she would a meeting with a ghost.

Whatever were his amusements, Messrs. Goldshed & Levi grumbled savagely at the cost of them. They grumbled because grumbling was a principle of theirs in carrying on their business.

"No matter how it turns out, keep always grumbling to the man who led you into the venture, especially if he has a claim to a share of the profits at the close."

So whenever Mr. Larkin saw Messrs. Goldshed & Levi he heard mourning and imprecation. The Hebrews shook their heads at the Christian, and chanted a Jeremiad, in duet, together, and each appealed to the other for confirmation of the dolorous and bitter truths he uttered. And the iron safe opened its jaws and disgorged the private ledger of the firm, which ponderous and greasy tome was laid on the desk with a pound, and opened at this transaction—the matter of Dingwell, Verney, etc.; and Mr. Levi would run his black nail along the awful items of expenditure that filled column after column.

"Look at that—look here—look, will you?—look, I say: you never sawed an account like that—never—all this here—look—down—and down—and down—and down—"

"Enough to frighten the Bank of England!" boomed Mr. Goldshed.

"Look down thish column," resumed Levi, "and thish, and thish, and thish—there's nine o' them—and not one stiver on th' other side. Look, look, look, look, *look!* Da-am, it's like a quaag, and a quickshand—nothing but shiver and shwallow, and give ush more"—and as he spoke Levi was knocking the knuckles of his long lean fingers fiercely upon the empty columns, and eyeing Larkin with a rueful ferocity, as if he had plundered and half murdered him and his partner, who sat there innocent as the babes in the wood.

Mr. Larkin knew quite well, however, that so far from regretting their investment, they would not have sold their ventures under a very high figure indeed.

"And that da-am Dingwell, talking as if he had us all in quod, by —, and always whimperin', and whingin', and swearin' for more—why you'd say, to listen to his bosh, 'twas him had us under his knuckle—you would—the lunatic!"

"And may I ask what he wants just at present?" inquired Mr. Larkin.

"What he always wants, and won't be easy never till he gets it—a walk up the mill, sir, and his head cropped, and six months' solitary, and a touch of corporal now and again. I never saw'd a cove as wanted a teasin' more: that's what he wants. What he's looking for,

of course, is different, only he shan't get it, nohow. And I think, looking at that book there, as I showed you this account in—considering what me and the gov'nor here has done—twould only be fair you should come down with summut, if you goes in for the lottery, with other gentlemen as pays their pool like bricks, and never does modest, by no chance."

"He has pushed that game a little too far," said Mr. Larkin; "I have considered his feelings a great deal too much."

"Yesh, but *we* have feelinsh. The *gov'nor* has feelinsh; I have *feelinsh*. Think what state our feelinsh is in, lookin' at that there account," said Mr. Levi with much pathos.

Mr. Larkin glanced toward the door, and then toward the window.

"We are quite *alone?*" said he, mildly.

"Yesh, without you have the devil in your pocket, as old Dingwell saysh," answered Levi, sulkily.

"For there are subjects of a painful nature, as you know, gentlemen, connected with this particular case," continued Mr. Larkin.

"Awful painful; but we'll sta-an' it," said Goldshed, with unctuous humor; "we'll sta-an' it, but wishes it over quick;" and he winked at Levi.

"Yesh, he wishes it over quick," echoed Levi; "the gov'nor and me, we wishes it over quick."

"And so do I, *most* assuredly; but we must have a little patience. If deception does lurk here—and you know I warned you I suspected it—we must not prematurely trouble Lord Verney."

"He might throw up the sponge, he might, I *know*," said Levi, with a nod.

"I don't know what course Lord Verney might think it right in such a case to adopt; I only know that until I am in a position to reduce suspicion to certainty, it would hardly consist with right feeling to torture his mind upon the subject. In the mean time he is—a—growing—"

"Growing warm in his berth," said Goldshed.

"Establishing himself, I should say, in his position. He has been incurring, I need hardly tell you, enormous expense in restoring (I might say *re-building*) the princely mansions of Ware, and of Verney House. He applied much ready money to that object, and has charged the estates with nearly sixty thousand pounds besides." Mr. Larkin lowered his tones reverentially at the mention of so considerable a sum.

"I know Sirachs did nigh thirty thousband o' that," said Mr. Goldshed.

"And that tends to—to—as I may say, *steady* him in his position; and I may mention in confidence, gentlemen, that there are other measures on the *tapis* (he pronounced taypis) which will farther and still more decidedly fix him in his position. It would pain us all deeply, gentlemen, that a premature disclosure of my uneasiness should inspire his lordship with a panic in which he might deal ruinously with his own interests, and, in fact, as you say, Mr. Levi, throw up the—the—"

"Sponge," said Levi, reflectively.

"But I may add," said Mr. Larkin, "that I am impatiently watching the moment when it may became my duty to open my suspicions fully to Lord Verney; and that I have reason to know that that moment can not now be distant."

"Here's Tomlinshon comin' up, gov'nor," said Mr. Levi, jumping off the table on which he had been sitting, and sweeping the great ledger into his arms, he pitched it into its berth in the safe, and locked it into that awful prison-house.

"I said he would," said Goldshed, with a lazy smile, as he unlocked a drawer in the lumbering office table at which he sat. "Don't bring out them overdue renewals; we'll not want them till next week."

Mr. Tomlinson, a tall, thin man, in light drab trowsers, with a cotton umbrella swinging in his hand, and a long care-worn face, came striding up the court.

"You won't do *that* for him?" asked Levi.

"No, not to-day," murmured Mr. Goldshed, with a wink. And Mr. Tomlinson's timid knock and feeble ring at the door were heard.

And Mr. Larkin put on his well-brushed hat, and pulled on his big lavender gloves, and stood up at his full length, in his new black frock-coat, and waistcoat and trowsers of the accustomed hue, and presents the usual glossy and lavender-tinted effect, and a bland simper rests on his lank cheeks, and his small pink eyes look their adieux upon Messrs. Goldshed & Levi, on whom his airs and graces are quite lost; and with his slim silk umbrella between his great finger and thumb, he passes loftily by the cotton umbrella of Mr. Tomlinson, and fancies, with a pardonable egotism, that that poor gentleman, whose head is full of his bill-book and renewals, and possible executions, and preparing to deceive a villainous omniscience, and to move the compassion of Pandemonium—is thinking of *him*, and mistaking him, possibly, for a peer, or for some other type of aristocracy.

The sight of that unfortunate fellow, Tomlinson, with a wife and a seedy hat, and children, and a cotton umbrella, whose little business was possibly about to be knocked about his ears, moved a lordly pity in Mr. Larkin's breast, and suggested contrasts, also, of many kinds, that were calculated to elate his good humor; and as he stepped into the cab, and the driver waited to know "where," he thought he might as well look in upon the recluse of Rosemary Court, and give him, of course with the exquisite tact that was peculiar to him, a hint or two in favor of reason and moderation; for really it *was quite* true what Mr. Levi had said about the preposterous presumption of a person in Mr. Dingwell's position affecting the airs of a dictator.

So being in the mood to deliver a lecture, to the residence of that uncomfortable old gentleman he drove, and walked up the flagged pas-

sage to the flagged court-yard, and knocked at the door, and looked up at the square ceiling of sickly sky, and strode up the narrow stairs after Mrs. Rumble.

"How d'ye do, sir? Your soul quite well, I trust. Your spiritual concerns flourishing today?" was the greeting of Mr. Dingwell's mocking voice.

"Thanks, Mr. Dingwell; I'm very well," answered Mr. Larkin, with a bow which was meant to sober Mr. Dingwell's mad humor.

Sarah Rumble, as we know, had a defined fear of Mr. Dingwell, but also a vague terror; for there was a great deal about him ill-omened and mysterious. There was a curiosity, too, active within her, intense and rather ghastly, about all that concerned him. She did not care, therefore, to get up and go away from the small hole in the carpet which she was darning on the lobby, and through the door she heard faintly some talk she didn't understand, and Mr. Dingwell's voice, at a high pitch, said—

"D— you, sir, do you think I'm a fool? Don't you think I've *your letter*, and a copy of my own? If we draw swords, egad, sir, mine's the longer and sharper, as you'll feel. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, lawk!" gasped Sarah Rumble, standing up, and expecting the clash of rapiers.

"Your face, sir, is as white and yellow—you'll excuse me—as an old turban. I beg your pardon; but I want you to understand that I see you're frightened, and that I won't be bullied *by* you."

"I don't suppose, sir, you meditate totally ruining yourself," said Mr. Larkin, with dignity.

"I tell you, sir, if any thing goes wrong with me, I'll make a clean breast of it—*every thing*—ha, ha, ha!—upon my honor—and we two shall grill together."

Larkin had no idea he was going in for so hazardous and huge a game when he sat down to play. His vision was circumscribed, his prescience small. He looked at the beast he had imported, and wished him in a deep grave in Scutari, the scheme quashed, and the stakes drawn.

But wishing would not do. The spirit was evoked—in nothing more manageable than at first; on the contrary, rather more insane. Nerve was needed, subtlety, compliance, and he must manage him.

"Why the devil did you bring me here, sir, if you were not prepared to treat me properly? You know my circumstances, and you want to practice on my misfortunes, you vile rogue, to mix me up in your fraudulent machinations."

"Pray, sir, not so loud. Do—*do* command yourself," remonstrated Larkin, almost affectionately.

"Do you think I'm come all this way, at the risk of my life, to be *your* slave, you shabby, canting attorney? I'd better be where I was, or in kingdom come. By Allah! sir, you *have* me, and I'm your *master*, and you shan't have my soul for nothing."

There came a loud knock at the hall-door, and if it had been a shot and killed them both, the debaters in the drawing-room could not have been more instantaneously and breathlessly silent.

Down glided Sarah Rumble, who had been expecting this visit, to pay the taxman.

And she had hardly taken his receipt, when Mr. Larkin, very pink, endeavoring to smile in his discomfiture, and observing with a baleful condescension, "A sweet day, Mrs. Rumble," appeared, shook his ears a little, and adjusted his hat, and went forth, and Rosemary Court saw him no more for some time.

CHAPTER LVI.

IN VERNEY HOUSE.

Mr. Larkin got into his cab, and ordered the cabman, in a loud voice, to drive to Verney House.

"Didn't he know Verney House? He thought every cabman in London knew Verney House! The house of Lord Viscount Verney, in — Square. Why, it fills up a whole side of it."

He looked at his watch. He had twenty-seven minutes to reach it in. It was partly to get rid of a spare half-hour, that he had paid his unprofitable visit to Rosemary Court.

Mr. Larkin registered a vow to confer no more with Mr. Dingwell. He eased his feelings by making a note of this resolution in that valuable little memorandum-book which he carried about with him in his pocket.

"*Saw Mr. Dingwell this day—as usual, impracticable and ill-bred to a hopeless degree—waste of time and worse—resolved that this gentleman being inaccessible to reason, is not to be argued, but DEALT with, should occasion hereafter arise for influencing his conduct.*"

Somewhere about Temple Bar, Mr. Larkin's cab got locked in a string of vehicles, and he put his head out of the window, not being sorry for an opportunity of astonishing the citizens by calling to the driver—

"I say, my good fellow, can't you get out? I told Lord Verney to expect me at half past one. Do, pray, get me out of this, any way, and you shall have a gratuity of half a crown. Verney House is a good step from this. Do try. His lordship will be as much obliged to you as I am."

Mr. Larkin's assiduities and flatteries were, in truth, telling upon Lord Verney, with whom he was stealing into a general confidence which alarmed many people, and which Cleve Verney hated more than ever.

With the pretty mansion of Hazelden the relations, as Lord Verney would have said, of the House of Ware were no longer friendly. This was another instance of the fragility of human arrangements, and the vanity of human hopes. The altar had been erected, the swine sacrificed, and the augurs and harnspices on

oth sides had predicted nothing but amity and oncord. Game, fruit, and venison, went and ame—"Much good may it do your good eart." "It was ill-killed," etc. Master hallow and Master Page could not have been ıore courteous on such occasions. But on the *ête champêtre* had descended a sudden procella. 'he roses were whirling high in the darkened ir, the flatteries and laughter were drowned in ıunder, and the fiddles smashed with hailstones s large as potatoes.

A general election had come and gone, and ı that brief civil war old Vane Etherage was ound at the wrong side. In Lord Verney's ınguage neighbor meant something like vassal, nd Etherage, who had set up his banners and rrayed his power on the other side, was a rebel. 'he less forgivable that he had, as was authen- ically demonstrated, by this step himself inflict- d that defeat in the county which had wound- d Lord Verney to the quick.

So silence descended upon the interchange f civil speeches; the partridges and pheasants ringed from Ware in a new direction, and old Vane Etherage stayed his friendly hand also; nd those tin cases of Irish salmon, from the old entleman's fisheries, packed in ice, as fresh as f they had sprung from the stream only half an ıour before, were no longer known at Ware; nd those wonderful fresh figs, green and pur- ple, which Lord Verney affected, for which Hazelden is famous, and which Vane Etherage vas fond of informing his guests were absolutely ınequaled in any part of the known world. England could not approach them for bulk and ipeness, nor foreign parts—and he had eaten igs wherever figs grew—for aroma and flavor, ıo longer crossed the estuary. Thus this game of beggar-my-neighbor began. Lord Verney ecalled his birds, and Mr. Etherage withdrew ıis figs. Mr. Etherage lost his great black grapes; and Lord Verney sacrificed his salmon, ınd in due time Lord Verney played a writ, ınd invited an episode in a court of law, and ınother, more formidable, in the Court of Chan- ery.

So the issues of war were knit again, and Vane Etherage was now informed by his law- ers there were some very unpleasant questions nooted affecting his title to the Windermore estate, for which he paid a trifling rent to the Verneys.

So, when Larkin went into Verney House he vas closeted with its noble master for a good while, and returning to a smaller library—de- voted to blue books and pamphlets—where he ıad left a dispatch-box and umbrella during his wait for admission to his noble client, he found Cleve busy there.

"Oh, Mr. Larkin. How d'ye do? Any thing to say to me?" said the handsome young man, whose eye looked angry though he smiled.

"Ah, thanks. No, *no*, Mr. Verney. I hope and trust I see you well; but no, I had not any communication to make. Shall I be honored, Mr. Verney, with any communication from you?"

"I've nothing to say, thanks, except of course to say how much obliged I am for the very particular interest you take in my affairs."

"I should be eminently gratified, Mr Verney, to merit your approbation, but I fear, sir, as yet I can hardly hope to have merited your thanks," said Mr. Larkin modestly.

"You won't let me thank you; but I quite understand the nature and extent of your kindness. My uncle is by no means so reserved, and he has told me very frankly the care you have been so good as to take of me. He's more obliged even than I am, and so, I am told, is Lady Wimbledon also."

Cleve had said a great deal more than at starting he had at all intended. It would have been easy to him to have dismissed the attorney without allusion to the topic that made him positively hateful in his eyes, but it was not easy to hint at it, and quite command himself also, and the result illustrated the general fact that total abstinence is easier than moderation.

Now the effect of this little speech of Cleve's upon the attorney, was to abash Mr. Larkin, and positively to confound him, in a degree quite unusual in a Christian so armed on most occasions with that special grace called presence of mind. The blood mounted to his hollow cheeks, and up to the summit of his tall bald head; his eyes took their rat-like character, and looked dangerously in his for a second, and then down to the floor, and scanned his own boots; and he bit his lip, and essayed a little laugh, and tried to look innocent, and broke down in the attempt. He cleared his voice once or twice to speak, but said nothing; and all this time Cleve gave him no help whatsoever, but enjoyed his evident confusion with an angry sneer.

"I hope, Mr. Cleve Verney," at length Mr. Larkin began, "where duty and expediency pull in opposite directions, I shall always be found at the right side."

"The winning side at all events," said Cleve.

"The *right* side, I venture to repeat. It has been my misfortune to be misunderstood more than once in the course of my life. It is our duty to submit to misinterpretation, as to other afflictions, patiently. I hope I have done so. My first duty is to my client."

"*I m* no client of yours, sir."

"Well, conceding that, sir, to your *uncle*—to Lord *Verney*, I will say—to his views of what the interests of his house demand, and to his feelings."

"Lord Verney has been good enough to consult *me*, hitherto, upon this subject—a not quite unnatural confidence, I venture to think—more than you seem to suspect. He seems to think, and so do I, that I've a voice in it, and has not left me absolutely in the hands—in a matter of so much importance and delicacy—of his country lawyer."

"I had no power in this case, sir; not even of mentioning the subject to you, who certainly, in one view, are more or less affected by it."

"Thank you for the concession," sneered Cleve.

"I make it unaffectedly, Mr. Cleve Verney," replied Larkin, graciously.

"My uncle, Lord Verney, has given me leave to talk to you upon the subject. I venture to decline that privilege. I prefer speaking to him. He seems to think that *I* ought to be allowed to advise a little in the matter, and that with every respect for *his* wishes, *mine* also are entitled to be a little considered. Should I ever talk to you, Mr. Larkin, it shan't be to ask your advice. I'm detaining you, sir, and I'm also a little busy myself."

Mr. Larkin looked at the young man for a second or two a little puzzled; but encountering only a look of stern impatience, he made his best bow, and the conference ended.

A few minutes later in came our old friend, Tom Sedley.

"Oh! Sedley? Very glad to see you here; but I thought you did not want to see my uncle just now; and this is the most likely place, except the library, to meet him in."

"He's gone; I saw him go out this moment. I should not have come in otherwise; and you mustn't send me away, dear Cleve, I'm in such awful trouble. Every thing has gone wrong with us at Hazelden. You know that quarrying company—the slates—that *odious* fellow, Larkin, led him into, before the election—and all the other annoyances began."

"You mean the Llandrwyd company?"

"Yes; so I do."

"But that's quite ruined, you know. Sit down."

"I know. He has lost—frightfully—and Mr. Etherage must pay up ever so much in calls beside; and unless he can get it on a mortgage of the Windermore estate, he can't possibly pay them—and I've been trying, and the result is just this—they won't lend it anywhere till the litigation is settled."

"Well, what can I do?" said Cleve, yawning stealthily into his hand, and looking very tired. I'm afraid these tragic conferences of Tom Sedley's did not interest Cleve very much; rather bored him, on the contrary.

"They won't lend, I say, while this litigation is pending."

"Depend upon it they won't," said Cleve.

"And in the mean time, you know, Mr. Etherage would be ruined."

"Well, I see; but, I say again, what can I do?"

"I want you to try if any thing can be done with Lord Verney," said Tom, beseechingly.

"Talk to my uncle? I wish, dear Tom, you could teach me how to do that."

"It can't do any harm, Cleve—it can't," urged Tom Sedley, piteously.

"Nor one particle of good. You might as well talk to that picture—I do assure you, you might."

"But it could be no pleasure to him to ruin Mr. Etherage!"

"I'm not so sure of that; between ourselves, forgiving is not one of his weaknesses."

"But I say it's quite impossible—an old family, and liked in the county—it would be a scandal forever!" pleaded Tom Sedley, distractedly.

"Not worse than that business of Booth Fanshawe," said Cleve, looking down; "no, he never forgives any thing. I don't think he perceives he's taking a revenge; he has not mind enough for repentance," said Cleve, who was not in good humor with his uncle just then.

"Won't you try? you're such an eloquent fellow, and there's really so much to be said."

"I do assure you, there's no more use than in talking to the chimney-piece; but if you make a point of it, I will; but, by Jove, you could hardly choose a worse advocate just now, for he's teasing me to do what I *can't* do. If you heard my miserable story, it would make you laugh; it's like a thing in a *petit comedie*, and it's breaking my heart."

"Well, then, you'll try—won't you try?" said Tom, overlooking his friend's description of his own troubles.

"Yes; as you desire it, I'll try; but I don't expect the slightest good from it, and possibly some mischief," he replied.

"A thousand thanks, my dear Cleve; I'm going down to-night. Would it be too much to ask you for a line, or, if it's *good* news, a telegram to Lluinan?"

"I may safely promise you that, I'm sorry to say, without risk of trouble. You mustn't think me unkind, but it would be cruel to let you hope when there is not, really, a chance."

So Tom drove away to his club, to write his daily love-letter to Agnes Etherage, in time for post; and to pen a few lines for old Vane Etherage, and try to speak comfortably to that family, over whose roof had gathered an awful storm.

CHAPTER LVII.

"That night a child might understand
The de'il had business on his hand."

I ENDED my last chapter with mention of a metaphoric storm; but a literal storm broke over the city of London on that night, such as its denizens remembered for many a day after. The lightning seemed, for more than an hour, the continuous pulsations of light from a sulphurous furnace, and the thunder pealed with the cracks and rattlings of one long roar of artillery. The children, waked by the din, cried in their beds in terror, and Sarah Rumble got her dress about her, and said her prayers in panic.

After a while the intervals between the awful explosions were a little more marked, and Miss Rumble's voice could be heard by the children, comforting and re-assuring in the brief lulls; although had they known what a fright their comforter was herself in, their confidence in her would have been impaired.

Perhaps there was a misgiving in Sarah Rumble's mind that the lightnings and thunders of irate heaven were invoked by the presence of her mysterious lodger. Was even she herself guiltless, in hiding under her roof-tree that impious old sinner, whom Rosemary Court disgorged at dead of night, as the church-yard does a ghost — about whose past history — whose goings and whose plans, except that they were wicked—she knew no more than about those of an evil spirit, had she chanced, in one of her spectre-seeing moods, to spy one moving across the lobby.

His talk was so cold and wicked; his temper so fiendish; his nocturnal disguises and outgoings so obviously pointed to secret guilt; and his relations with the meek Mr. Larkin, and with those potent Jews, who, grumbling and sullen, yet submitted to his caprices, as genii to those of the magician who has the secret of command—that Mr. Dingwell had in her eyes something of a supernatural horror surrounding him. In the thunder-storm, Sarah Rumble vowed secretly to reconsider the religious propriety of harboring this old man; and amid these qualms, it was with something of fear and anger that, in a silence between the peals of the now subsiding storm, she heard the creak of his shoe upon the stair.

That even on such a night, with the voice of divine anger in the air, about his ears, he could not forego his sinister excursions, and for once at these hours remain decorously in his rooms! Her wrath overcame her fear of him. She would not have her house burnt and demolished over her head, with thunder-bolts, for *his* doings.

She went forth, with her candle in her hand, and stood at the turn of the banister, confronting Mr. Dingwell, who, also furnished with a candle, was now about midway down the last flight of stairs.

"Egeria, in the thunder!" exclaimed the hard, scoffing tones of Mr. Dingwell; whom, notwithstanding her former encounter with him, she would hardly have recognized in his ugly disguise.

"A hoffle night for any one to go out, sir," she said, rather sternly, with a courtesy at the same time.

"Hoffle, is it?" said Mr. Dingwell, amused, with mock gravity.

"The hofflest, sir, I think I hever 'ave remembered."

"Why, ma'am, it isn't *raining;* I put my hand out of the window. There's none of that hoffle rain, ma'am, that gives a fellow rheumatism. I hope there's no unusual fog—is there?"

"*There*, sir;" exclaimed she, as a long and loud peal rattled over Rosemary Court, with a blue glare through the lobby window and the gas-light in the hall. She paused, and lifted her hand and eyes till it subsided, and then murmured an ejaculation.

"I like thunder, my dear. It reminds me of your name, dear Miss Rumble;" and he prolonged the name with a rolling pronunciation. "Shakespeare, you know, who says every thing better than any one else in the world, makes that remarkable old gentleman, King Lear, say, 'Thunder, *rumble* thy belly full!' Of course, *I* would not say *that* in a drawing-room, or to you; but kings are so refined that they may say things *we* can't, and a genius like Shakespeare hits it off."

"I would not go out, sir, on such a night, except I was very sure it was about something *good* I was a-going," said Miss Rumble, very pale.

"You labor under electro-phobia, my dear ma'am, and mistake it for piety. I'm not a bit afraid of that sort of artillery, madam. Here we are, two or three millions of people in this town; and two or three millions of shots, and we'll see by the papers, I venture to say, not one shot tells. Don't you think if Jupiter really meant mischief he could manage something better?"

"I know, sir, it ought to teach us"—here she winced and paused; for another glare, followed by another bellow of thunder, "long, loud, and deep," interposed. "It should teach us some godly fear, if we has none by nature."

Mr. Dingwell looked at his watch.

"Oh! Mr. Dingwell, it is hoffle. I wish you would only see it, sir."

"*See* the *thunder*—eh?"

"My poor mother. She always made us go down on our knees, and say our prayers—she would—while the thunder was."

"You'd have had rather long prayers to-night. How your knees must have ached—egad! I don't wonder you dread it, Miss Sarah."

"And so I *do*, Mr. Dingwell, and so I should. Which I think all other sinners should dread it also."

"Meaning *me?*"

"And take warning of the wrath to come."

Here was another awful clap.

"Hoffle it is, Mr. Dingwell, and a warnin' to *you*, sent special, mayhap."

"Hardly fair to disturb all the town for *me*, don't you think?"

"You're an old man, Mr. Dingwell."

"And you're an old woman, Miss Sarah," said he—not caring to be reminded of his years by other people, though he playfully called himself on occasions an old "boy"—"as old as Abraham's wife, whose namesake you are, though you have not lighted on an Abraham yet, nor become the mother of a great nation."

"Old enough to be good enough, as my poor mother used to say, sir; I am truly; and sorry I am, Mr. Dingwell, to see you, on this hoffle night, bent on no good. I'm afraid, sir—oh, sir, sir, oughtn't you think, with them sounds in your ears, Mr. Dingwell?"

"The most formidable thunder, my dear Sarah, proceeds from the silvery tongue of a woman. I can stand any other. *It* frightens me. So, egad, if you please, I'll take refuge in the open air, and go out, and patter a prayer."

And with a nod and a smirk, having had enough fooling, he glided by Miss Rumble, who made him an appalled courtesy, and, setting down his candle on the hall-table, he said, touching his false whiskers with his finger-tips, "Mind, not a word about these—By — you'd *better* not."

She made another courtesy. He stopped and looked at her for an answer.

"Can't you *speak?*" he said.

"No, sir—sure—not a word," she faltered.

"Good girl!" he said, and opened the door, with his latch-key in his pocket, on the pitchy darkness, which instantaneously illuminated by the lightning, and another awful roar of thunder broke over their heads.

"The voice of heaven in warning!" she murmured to herself, as she stood by the banisters, dazzled by the gleam, and listening to the reverberation ringing in her ears. "I pray God he may turn back yet."

He looked over his shoulder.

"Another shot, Miss Rumble—missed again, you see." He nodded, stepped out into the darkness, and shut the door. She heard his steps in the silence that followed, traversing the flags of the court.

"Oh dear! but I wish he *was* gone, right out—a hoffle old man he is. There's a weight on my conscience like, and a fright in my heart, there is, ever since he camed into the 'ouse. He is so presumptuous. To see that hold man made hup with them rings and whiskers, like a robber or a play-actor! And defyin' the blessed thunder of heaven—a walking hout, a mockin' and darin' it, at these hours—oh law!"

The interjection was due to another flash and peal.

"I wouldn't wonder—no more I would—if that flash was the death o' 'im!"

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE PALE HORSE.

Sally Rumble knocked at the usual hour at the old man's door next morning.

"Come in, ma'am," he answered, in a weary, peevish voice. "Open the window-shutter, and give me some light, and hand me my watch, please."

All which she did.

"I have not closed my eyes from the time I lay down."

"Not ailing, sir, I hope?"

"Just allow me to count, and I'll tell you, my dear."

He was trying his pulse.

"Just as I thought, egad. The pale horse in the Revelation, ma'am, he's running a gallop in my pulse; it has been threatening the last three days, and now I'm in for it, and I should not be surprised, Miss Sally, if it ended in a funeral in our alley."

"God forbid, sir."

"Amen, with all my heart. Ay, the pale horse; my head's splitting; oblige me with the looking-glass, and a little less light will answer. Thank you—very good. Just draw the curtain open at the foot of the bed; please, hold it nearer—thank you. Yes, a ghost, ma'am—ha, ha—at last, I do suppose. My eyes, too—I've seen pits, with the water drying up, hollow—ay, ay; sunk—and—now—did you see? Well, look at my tongue—here"—and he made the demonstration; "you never saw a worse tongue than *that*, I fancy; that tongue, ma'am, is eloquent, *I* think."

"Please God, sir, you'll soon be better."

"Draw the curtain a bit more; the light falls oddly, or—does it?—my face. Did you ever see, ma'am, a face so nearly the color of a coffin plate?"

"Don't be talking, sir, please, of no such thing," said Sally Rumble, taking heart of grace, for women generally pluck up a spirit when they see a man floored by sickness. I'll make you some whey or barley-water, or would you like some weak tea better?"

"Ay; will you draw the curtain close again, and take away the looking-glass? Thanks. I believe I've drank all the water in the carafe. Whey—well, I suppose it's the right thing: *caudle* when we're coming *in*, and *whey* ma'am, when we're going *out*. Baptism of Infants, Burial of the Dead! My poor mother, how she did put us through the Prayer-Book, and Bible—Bible. Dear me."

"There's a very good man, sir, please—the Rev. Doctor Bartlett, though he's gone rather old. He came in, and read a deal, and prayed, every day with my sister when she was sick, poor thing."

"Bartlett? What's his Christian name? You need not speak loud—it plays the devil with my head."

"The Rev. Thomas Bartlett, please, sir."

"Of Jesus?"

"What, sir, please?"

"Jesus *College*."

"Don't know, I'm sure, sir."

"Is he old?"

"Yes, sir, past seventy."

"Ha—well I don't care a farthing about him," said Mr. Dingwell.

"Will you, please, have in the apothecary, sir? I'll fetch him directly, if you wish."

"No—*no* apothecary, *no* clergyman; I don't believe in the Apostles' Creed, ma'am, and I don't believe in the jokes about apothecaries. If I'm to go, I'll go quietly, if you please."

Honest Sally Rumble was heavy at heart to see this old man, who certainly did look ghastly enough to suggest ideas of the undertaker and the sexton, in so unsatisfactory a plight as to his immortal part. Was he a Jew?—there wasn't a hair on his chin—or a Roman Catholic?—or a member of any one of those multitudinous forms of faith which she remembered in a stout volume, adorned with wood-cuts, and entitled "A Dictionary of all Religions," in

he back parlor of her granduncle, the tallow-:handler?

"Give me a glass of cold water, ma'am," aid the subject of her solicitude. "Thank 'ou—that's the best drink. *Slop*, I think you all it, a sick man can swallow."

Sally Rumble coughed a little, and fidgeted, nd at last she said: "Please, sir, would you vish I should fetch any other sort of a minis-er?"

"Don't plague me, pray; I believe in the rophet Rabelais and *je m'en vais chercher un rand peut être*—the two great chemists, Death, vho is going to analyze, and Life, to re-combine ne. I tell you, ma'am, my head is splitting; 'm very ill; I'll talk no more."

She hesitated. She lingered in the room, n her great perplexity; and Mr. Dingwell lay ack, with a groan.

"I'll tell you what you may do: go down to 'our landlord's office, and be so good as to say o either of those d—d Jew fellows—I don't are which—that I am as yc see me; it nayn't signify, it may blow over; but I've an dea it is serious; and tell them I said they had etter know that I am *very ill*, and that I've aken no step about it."

With another weary groan Mr. Dingwell let imself down on his pillow, and felt worse for is exertion, and very tired and stupid, and dd about the head, and would have been very lad to fall asleep; and with one odd pang of ear, sudden and cold, at his heart, he thought, 'I'm going to die at last—I'm going to die at ast—I'm going to die."

The physical nature in sickness acquiesces n death; it is the instructed mind that recoils; nd the more versed about the unseen things f futurity, unless when God, as it were, pre-naturely glorifies it, the more awful it recoils.

Mr. Dingwell was not more afraid than other inners who have lived for the earthy part of heir nature, and have taken futurity pretty nuch for granted, and are now going to test by he stake of *themselves* the value of their loose uesses.

No; he had chanced a great many things, nd they had turned out for the most part bet-er than he expected. Oh! no; the whole ourt, and the adjoining lanes, and, in short, he whole city of London, must go as he would —lots of company, it was not to be supposed it vas any thing very bad—and he was so devil-sh tired, *over*-fatigued—queer—worse than sea-ickness—that headache—fate—the change—an nd—what was it? At all events, a rest, a leep—sleep—could not be very bad; lots of leep, sir, and the chance—the chance—oh, es, things go pretty well, and I have not had ny good luck yet. I wish I could sleep a bit —yes, let kingdom-come be sleep"—and so groan, and the brain duller, and more pain, nd the immense fatigue that demands the enor-nous sleep.

When Sarah Rumble returned, Mr. Dingwell seemed, she thought, a great deal heavier. He made no remark, as he used to do, when she entered the room. She came and stood by the bedside, but he lay with his eyes closed, not asleep; she could see by the occasional motion of his lips, and the fidgety change of his posture, and his weary groanings. She waited for a time in silence.

"Better, sir?" she half whispered, after a minute or two.

"No," he said, wearily.

Another silence followed, and then she asked, "Would you like a drink, Mr. Dingwell, sir?"

"Yes—water."

So he drank a very little, and lay down again.

Miss Sarah Rumble stayed in the room, and nearly ten minutes passed without a word.

"What did he say?" demanded Mr. Dingwell so abruptly that Sarah Rumble fancied he had been dreaming.

"Who, sir, please?"

"The Jew—landlord," he answered.

"Mr. Levi's a-coming up, sir, please—he expected in twenty minutes," replied she.

Mr. Dingwell groaned; and two or three minutes more elapsed, and silence seemed to have re-established itself in the darkened chamber, when Mr. Dingwell raised himself up with a sudden alacrity, and said he—

"Sarah Rumble, fetch me my desk." Which she did, from his sitting-room.

"Put your hand under the bolster, and you'll find two keys on a ring, and a pocket-book. *Yes*. Now, Sarah Rumble, unlock that desk. Very good. Put out the papers on the coverlet before me; first bolt the door. Thank you, ma'am. There are a parcel of letters among those, tied across with a red silk cord—just so. Put them in my hand—thank you—and place all the rest back again neatly—*neatly*, if you please. Now lock the desk; replace it, and come here; but first give me pen and ink, and bolt the door again."

And as she did so he scrawled an address upon the blank paper in which these letters were wrapt.

The brown visage of his grave landlady was graver than ever, as she returned to listen for farther orders.

"Mrs. Sarah Rumble, I take you for an honest person; and as I may die this time, I make a particular request of *you*—take this little packet, and slip it between the feather-bed and the mattress, as near the centre as your arm will reach—thank you—remember it's there. If I die, ma'am, you'll find a ten-pound note wrapped about it, which I give to you; you need not thank—that will do. The letters addressed as they are you will deliver, without showing them, or *saying one word to any one* but to the gentleman himself, into whose own hands you must deliver them. You understand?"

"Yes, sir, please; I'm listening."

"Well, *attend*. There are two Jew gentlemen—your landlord, Mr. Levi, and the *old* Jew,

who have been with me once or twice—you know *them;* that makes *two;* and there is Mr. Larkin, the tall gentleman who has been twice here with them, with the lavender waistcoat and trowsers, the eye-glass with the black ribbon, the black frock coat—heigho! oh, dear, my head!—the red grizzled whiskers, and bald head."

"The religious gentleman, please, sir?"

"Exactly; the religious gentleman. Well, *attend.* The two Jews and the religious gentleman together make *three;* and those three gentlemen are all *robbers.*"

"*What*, sir?"

"*Robbers*—robbers! Don't you know what '*robbers*' means? They are all three *robbers.* Now, I don't think they'll want to fiddle with my money till I'm dead."

"Oh, Lord, sir!"

"'Oh, Lord!' of course. That will do. They won't touch my money till I'm dead, if they trust you; but they *will* want my desk—at least Larkin will. I shan't be able to look after things, for my head is very bad, and I shall be too drowsy—soon knocked up; so give 'em the desk, if they ask for it, and these keys from under the pillow; and if they ask you if there are any other papers, say *no;* and don't you tell them one word about the letters you've put between the beds here. If you betray me—you're a religious woman—yes—and believe in God—may God d—n you; and He will, for you'll be accessory to the villainy of those three miscreants. And now I've done what in me lies; and that is all—my last testament."

And Mr. Dingwell lay down wearily. Sarah Rumble knew that he was very ill; she had attended people in fever and seen them die. Mr. Dingwell was already perceptibly worse. As she was coming up with some whey, a knock came to the door, and opening it she saw Mr. Levi, with a very surly countenance, and his dark eyes blazing fiercely on her.

"How'sh Dingwell now?" he demanded, before he had time to enter and shut the door; "*worse*, is he?"

"Well, he's duller, sir."

"In his bed? Shut the door."

"Yes, sir, please. Didn't get up this morning. He expected you two hours ago, sir."

Levi nodded.

"What doctor did you fetch?" he asked.

"No doctor, please, sir. I thought you and *him* would choose."

Levi made no answer; so she could not tell by his surly face, which underwent no change, whether he approved or not. He looked at his watch.

"Larkin wasn't here to-day?"

"Mr. Larkin? No, sir, please."

"Show me Dingwell's room, till I have a look at him," said the Jew, gloomily.

So he followed her up stairs, and entered the darkened room without waiting for any invitation, and went to the window, and pulled open a bit of the shutter.

"What's it for?" grumbled Dingwell indistinctly from his bed.

"So you've bin and done it, you have," said the Jew, walking up with his hands in his pockets, and eyeing him from a distance as he might a glandered horse.

Dingwell was in no condition to retort on this swarthy little man, who eyed him with a mixture of disgust and malignity.

"How long has he been thish way," said the Jew, glowering on Sarah Rumble.

"Only to-day in bed, please, sir; but he has bin lookin' awful bad this two or three days, sir."

"Do you back it for *fever?*"

"I think it's *fever*, sir."

"I s'pose you'd twig fever fasht enough! Sheen lotsh of fever in your time?"

"Yes, sir, please."

"It *ish* fever, ten to one in fifties. Black death going, ma'am—*my* luck! Look at him there, d—n him, he'sh got it."

Levi looked at him surlily for a while with eyes that glowed like coals.

"This comsh o' them d—d holes you're always a-going to; there's always fever and every thing there, you great old buck goat."

Dingwell made an effort to raise himself, and mumbled, half awake—

"Let me—I'll talk to him—how dare you—when I'm better—*quiet*"—and he laid down his head again.

"When you *are*, you cursed sink. Look at all we've lost by you."

He stood looking at Dingwell savagely.

"He'll *die*," exclaimed he, making an angry nod, almost a butt, with his head toward the patient, and he repeated his prediction with a furious oath.

"See, you'll send down to the apothecary's for that chloride of lime, and them vinegars and things—or—no; you must wait here, for Larkin will come; and don't you let him go, mind. Me and Mr. Goldshed will be here in no time. Tell him the doctor's coming; and us—and I'll send up them things from the apothecary, and you put them all about in plates on the floor and tables. Bad enough to lose our money, and d— bad; but I won't take this—come out o' this room—if *I* can help."

And he entered the drawing-room, shutting Dingwell's door, and spitting on the floor, and then he opened the window.

"He'll *die*—do you *think* he'll die?" he exclaimed again.

"He's in the hands of God, sir," said Sally Rumble.

"He won't be long there—he'll die—*I say he will*—by — he will;" and the little Jew stamped on the floor, and clapped his hat on his head, and ran down the stairs, in a paroxysm of business and fury.

CHAPTER LIX.

IN WHICH HIS FRIENDS VISIT THE SICK.

Mr. Levi, when Sarah Rumble gave him ɜr lodger's message, did not, as he said, "vally a turn of a half-penny." He could not be ɜry ill if he could send his attendant out-of-ɔors, and deliver the terms in which his mes-ges were to be communicated. Mr. Levi's ıagnosis was that Mr. Dingwell's attack was the region of the purse or pocket-book, and ıat the "dodge" was simply to get the partners ıd Mr. Larkin together for the purpose of ex-acting more money.

Mr. Larkin was in town, and he had written ɔ that gentleman's hotel, also he had told Mr. oldshed, who took the same view, and laughed ı his lazy diapason over the weak invention of ıe enemy.

Levi accordingly took the matter very easily, ıd hours had passed before his visit, which was ıade pretty late in the afternoon, and he was niling over his superior sagacity in seeing ırough Dingwell's little dodge, as he walked ıto the court, when an officious little girl, in er mother's bonnet, running by his knee, said ompously—

"You'd better not go there, sir."

"And why sho, chickabiddy?" inquired Mr. ɜevi, derisively.

"No, you better not; there's a gentleman as as took the fever there."

"Where?" said Mr. Levi, suddenly inter-sted.

"In Mrs. Rumble's."

"*Is* there?—how do you know?"

"Lucy Maria Rumble, please, sir, she told ne, and he's *very bad.*"

The fashion of Levi's countenance was hanged as he turned from her suddenly, and ınocked so sharply at the door that the canary, ıanging from the window in his cage over the vay, arrested his song, and was agitated for an ıour afterward.

So Mr. Levi was now thoroughly aroused to he danger that had so suddenly overcast his ıopes, and threatened to swallow in the bottom-ess sea of death the golden stake he had ven-ıured.

It was not, nevertheless, until eight o'clock n the evening, so hard a thing is it to collect ıhree given men, [what then must be the office ɔf whip to Whig or Tory side of the House?] ıhat the two Jews and Mr. Larkin were actually ıssembled in Mr. Dingwell's bedroom, now reek-ng with disinfectants and prophylactic fluids.

The party were in sore dismay, for the inter-ɜsting patient had begun to maunder very pre-posterously in his talk. They listened, and heard him say—

"That's a lie—I say, I'd nail his tongue to the post. Bells won't ring for it—lots of bells in England; you'll not find any *here*, though."

And then it went off into a mumbling, and Mr. Goldshed, who was listening disconsolately, exclaimed, "My eyesh!"

"Well, how do you like it, gov'nor? I said he'd walk the plank, and so he will," said Levi. "He will—he will;" and Levi clenched his white teeth, with an oath.

"*There*, Mr. Levi, *pray*, pray, none of *that*," said Mr. Larkin.

The three gentlemen were standing in a row, from afar off observing the patient, with an in-tense scrutiny of a gloomy and, I may say, a savage kind.

"He was an unfortunate agent—no energy, except for his pleasures," resentfully resumed Mr. Larkin, who was standing farthest back of the three speculators. "Indolent, impractica-ble enough to ruin fifty cases; and now here he lies in a fever, contracted, you think, Mr. Levi, in some of his abominable haunts."

Mr. Larkin did not actually say "d— him," but he threw a very dark, sharp look upon his acquaintance in the bed.

"Abawminable, to be sure, abawminable. Bah! It's all true. The hornies has their eye on him these seven weeks past—curse the beasht," snarled Mr. Levi, clenching his fists in his pockets, "and every da—a—am muff that helped to let me in for this here rotten busi-ness."

"Meaning *me*, sir?" said Mr. Larkin, flushing up to the top of his head a fierce pink.

Levi answered nothing, and Mr. Larkin did not press his question.

It is very easy to be companionable and good-humored while all goes pleasantly. It is fail-ure, loss, and disappointment that try the so-ciable qualities; even those three amiable men felt less amicable under the cloud than they had under the sunshine.

So they all three looked in their several ways angrily and thoughtfully at the gentleman in the typhus fever, who said rather abruptly—

"She killed herself, sir; foolish 'oman! Capital dancing, gentlemen! Capital dancing, ladies! Capital—capital—admirable dancing. God help us!" and so it sunk again into mum-bling.

"Capital da-a-ancing, and who pays the piper?" asked Mr. Goldshed, with a rather fero-cious sneer. "It has cost us five hundred to a thousand."

"And a doctor," suggested Levi.

"Doctor, the devil! I say; I've paid through the nose," or as he pronounced that organ through which his metallic declamation droned, *noshe*. "It's Mr. Larkin's turn now; it's all da-a-am rot; a warm fellow like you, Mr. Larkin, putting all the loss on me; how can I sta-a-an' that—sta-a-an' all the losses, and share the profits—ba-a-ah, sir; that couldn't pay no-how."

"I think," said Mr. Larkin, "it may be ques-tionable how far a physician would be, just in this imminent stage of the attack, at all useful or even desirable; but, Miss Rumble, if I un-derstand you, he is quite *compos*—I mean, quite, so to speak, in his senses, in the early part of the day."

He paused, and Miss Rumble from the other side of the bed contributed her testimony.

"Well, that being so," began Mr. Larkin, but stopped short as Mr. Dingwell took up his parable, forgetting how wide of the mark the sick man's interpolations were.

"There's a vulture over there," said Mr. Dingwell's voice, with an unpleasant distinctness; "you just tie a turban on a stick," and then he was silent.

Mr. Larkin cleared his voice and resumed—

"Well, as I was saying, when the attack, whatever it is, has developed itself, a medical man may possibly be available; but in the mean time, as he is spared the possession of his faculties, and we all agree, gentlemen, whatever particular form of faith may be respectively ours, that some respect is due to futurity; I would say that a clergyman, at all events, might make him advantageously a visit to-morrow, and afford him an opportunity at least of considering the interests of his soul."

"Oh! da-a-am his shoul, it's his *body*. We must try to keep him together," said Mr. Goldshed impatiently. "If he dies the money's all lost, every shtiver; if he don't, he's a sound speculation; we must raise a doctor among us, Mr. Larkin."

"It is highly probable, indeed, that before long the unfortunate gentleman may require medical advice," said Mr. Larkin, who had a high opinion of the "speculation," whose pulse was at this moment unfortunately at a hundred and twenty. "The fever, my dear sir, if such it be, will have declared itself in a day or two; in the mean time, nursing is all that is really needful, and Miss Rumble, I have no doubt, will take care that the unhappy gentleman is properly provided in that respect."

The attorney, who did not want at that moment to be drawn into a discussion on contributing to expenses, smiled affectionately on Miss Rumble, to whom he assigned the part of good Samaritan.

"He'll want some one at night, sir, please; I could not undertake myself, sir, for both day and night," said brown Miss Rumble, very quietly.

"*There!* That'sh it!" exclaimed Levi, with a vicious chuckle, and a scowl, extending his open hand energetically toward Miss Rumble, and glaring from Mr. Larkin to his partner.

"Nothing but *pay;* down with the dust, Goldshed & Levi. Bleed like a pair o' beashtly pigs, Goldshed & Levi, *do!* There's death in that fellow's face, I say. It's all bosh, doctors and nurses; throwing good money after bad, and then, five pounds to bury him, drat him!"

"Bury? ho! no, the parish, the work-houshe, the authorities shall bury him," said Mr. Goldshed, briskly.

"Dead as a Mameluke, dead as a Janizary bowstrung!" exclaimed Mr. Dingwell, and went off into an indistinct conversation in a foreign language.

"Stuff a stocking down his throat, will you?" urged Mr. Levi; a duty, however, which no one undertook. "I see that cove's booked; he looks just like old Solomons looked when he had it. It isn't no use; all rot, throwing good money arter bad, I say; let him be; let him die."

"I'll *not* let him die; no, he shan't. I'll *make* him pay. I made the Theatre of Fascination pay," said Mr. Goldshed serenely, alluding to a venture of his devising, by which the partnership made ever so much money in spite of a prosecution and heavy fines and other expenses. "I say 'tisn't my principle to throw up the game, by no means—no—with my hand in hand and the stakes in the pocket—never!"

Here Mr. Goldshed wagged his head slowly with a solemn smile, and Mr. Dingwell, from the bed, said—

"Move it, will you? That way—I wish you'd help—b-bags, sir—sacks, sir—awfully hard lying—full of ears and noses—egad!—why not?—cut them all off, I say. D—n the Greeks! Will you move it? *Do* move that sack—it hurts his ribs—ribs—*I* never got the bastinado."

"Not but what you deserved it," remarked Mr. Levi.

And Mr. Dingwell's babbling went on, but too indistinctly to be unraveled.

"I say," continued Mr. Goldshed, sublimely, "if that 'ere speculative thing in the bed there comes round, and gets all square and right, I'll make him pay. I'm not funked—who's afraid?—wiry old brick!"

"I think so," acquiesced Mr. Larkin with gentle solemnity; "Mr. Dingwell is certainly, as you say, wiry. There are many things in his favor, and Providence, Mr. Goldshed—Providence is over us all."

"Providence, to be sure," said Mr. Goldshed, who did not disdain help from any quarter. "Where does he keep his money, ma'am?"

"Under his bolster, please, sir—under his head," answered Sarah Rumble.

"Take it out, please," said Mr. Goldshed.

She hesitated.

"*Give* the man hish money, woman, ca-a-an't you?" bawled Mr. Levi fiercely, and extending his arm toward the bed.

"You had better—*yes*, ma'am, the money belongs to Messrs. Goldshed & Levi," said Mr. Larkin, interposing in the character of *vir pietate gravis*.

Sally Rumble, recollecting Mr. Dingwell's direction, "Let 'em have the money, too, if they press for it," obeyed and slid her hand under his bolster, and under his head, from the other side, where she was standing; and Dingwell, feeling the motion, I suppose, raised his head and stared with sunken eyes dismally at the three gentlemen, whom he plainly did not recognize, or possibly saw in the shapes of foxes, wolves, or owls, which Æsop would have metaphorically assigned them, and with a weary groan he closed his wandering eyes again, and sank down on the pillow.

Miss Rumble drew forth a roll of bank-notes with a string tied round them.

"Take the money, Levi," said Goldshed, drawing a step backward.

"Take it yourself, gov'nor," said Levi, waving back Miss Sally Rumble, and edging back a little himself.

"Well," said Goldshed, quietly, "I see you are afraid of that infection."

"I believe you," answered Levi.

"So am I," said Goldshed, uneasily.

"And no wonder!" added Mr. Larkin, anticipating himself an invitation to accept the questionable trust.

"Put them notes down on the table there," said Mr. Goldshed.

And the three gentlemen eyed the precious roll of paper as I have seen people at a chemical lecture eye the explodable compounds on the professor's table.

"I tell you what, ma'am," said Goldshed, "you'll please get a dry bottle and a cork, and put them notes into it, and cork it down, ma'am, and give it to Mr. Levi."

"And count them first, please, Miss Rumble—shan't she, Mr. Goldshed?" suggested Mr. Larkin.

"What for?—isn't the money ours?" howled Mr. Levi, with a ferocious stare on the attorney's meek face.

"Only, Mr. Goldshed, with a view to distinctness, and to prevent possible confusion in any future account," said Mr. Larkin, who knew that Dingwell had got money from the Verneys, and thought that if there was any thing recovered from the wreck, he had as good a right to his salvage as another.

Mr. Goldshed met his guileless smile with an ugly sneer, and said—

"Oh, count them, to be sure, for the gentleman. It isn't a ha'penny to me."

So Miss Rumble counted seventy-five pounds in bank-notes and four pounds in gold, two of which Mr. Goldshed committed to her in trust for the use of the patient, and the remainder were duly bottled and corked down according to Mr. Goldshed's grotesque precaution, and in this enclosure Mr. Levi consented to take the money in hand, and so it was deposited for the night in the iron safe in Messrs. Goldshed & Levi's office, to be uncorked in the morning by old Solomons, the cashier, who would, no doubt, be puzzled by the peculiarity of the arrangement, and with the aid of a corkscrew, lodged to the credit of the firm.

Mr. Goldshed next insisted that Dingwell's life, fortunately for that person, was too important to the gentlemen assembled there to be trifled with; and said that sage—

"We'll have the best doctor in London—six pounds' worth of *him*—d'ye see? And under him a clever *young* doctor to look in four times a day, and we'll arrange with the young 'un on the principle of no cure no pay—that is, we'll give fifty pounds this day six weeks, if the party in bed here is alive at that date."

Upon this basis I believe an arrangement was actually completed. The great Doctor Langley, when he called, and questioned Miss Rumble, and inspected the patient, told Mr. Levi, who was in waiting, that the old gentleman had been walking about in a fever for more than a week before he took to his bed, and that the chances were very decidedly against his recovery.

A great anxiety overcame Mr. Larkin like a summer cloud, and the serene sunshine of that religious mind was overcast with storm and blackness. For the recovery of Mr. Dingwell were offered up, in one synagogue at least, prayers as fervent as any ever made for that of our early friend Charles Surface, and it was plain that never was patriarch, saint, or hero mourned as the venerable Mr. Dingwell would be, by at least three estimable men, if the fates were to make away with him on this critical occasion.

The three gentlemen as they left his room on the evening I have been describing, cast their eyes upon Mr. Dingwell's desk, and hesitated, and looked at one another, darkly, for a moment in silence.

"There'sh no reashon why we shouldn't," drawled Mr. Goldshed.

"I object to the removal of the desk," said Mr. Larkin, with a shake of his head, closing his eyes, and raising his hand as if about to pronounce a benediction on the lid of it. "If he is spared it might become a very serious thing—I decidedly object."

"Who want'sh to take this man'sh desk?" drawled Mr. Goldshed, surlily.

"Who want'sh to take it?" echoed Levi, and stared at him with an angry gape:

"But there will be no harm, I shay, in looking what paper'sh there," continued Mr. Goldshed. "Does he get letters?"

"Only two, sir, please, as I can remember, since he came here."

"By po-sht, or by ha-a-an'?" inquired Goldshed.

"By 'and, sir, please; it was your Mr. Solomons as fetched 'em here, sir."

He lifted up the desk, swayed it gently, and shook it a little, looking at it as if it were a musical box about to strike up, and so set it down again softly. "There'sh papersh in that box," he hummed thoughtfully to himself.

"I think I may speak here," said Mr. Larkin, looking up sadly and loftily, as he placed his hat upon his bald head, "with some little authority as a professional man—if in no higher capacity—and I may take upon myself to say, that by no possibility can the contents of that desk affect the very simple and, in a certain sense, direct transactions in which our clients' interests, and in a degree ours also, are involved, and I object on higher grounds still, I hope, to any irregularity as respects that desk."

"If you're confident, Mr. Larkinsh, there'sh nothing in it can affect the bushiness we're on, I would not give you a cancel' Queen's head for the lot."

"Perfectly confident, my dear Mr. Goldshed."

"He'sh perfectly confident," repeated Mr. Levi in his guv'nor's ear, from over his shoulder.

"Come along, then," said Mr. Goldshed, shuffling slowly out of the room, with his hands in his pockets.

"It's agreed then, gentlemen, there's no tampering with the desk?" urged Mr. Larkin entreatingly.

"Shertainly," said Mr. Goldshed, beginning to descend the stairs.

"Shertainly," repeated Mr. Levi, following him.

And the three gentlemen, in grave and friendly guise, walked away together, over the flagged court. Mr. Larkin did not half like taking the arms of these gentlemen, but the quarter of the town was not one where he was likely to meet any of either the spiritual or the terrestrial aristocracy with whom he desired specially to stand well. So he moved along conscious, not unpleasantly, of the contrast which a high-bred gentleman must always present in juxtaposition with such persons as Goldshed & Levi. They walked through the dingy corridor called Caldwell Alley, and through Ive's Lane, and along the market, already flaring and glaring with great murky jets of gas wavering in the darkening stalls, and thence by the turn to the left into the more open street, where the cab-stand is, and then having agreed to dine together at the "Three Roses" in Milk Lane in half an hour, the gentlemen parted—Messrs. Goldshed & Levi to fly in a cab to meet their lawyer at their office, and Mr. Larkin to fly westward to his hotel, to inquire for a letter which he expected. So smiling they parted; and, so soon as Mr. Larkin was quite out of sight, Mr. Levi descended from their cab, and with a few parting words which he murmured in Mr. Goldshed's ear, left him to drive away by himself, while he retraced his steps at his leisure to Rosemary Court, and finding the door of Miss Rumble's house open, with Lucy Maria at it, entered and walked straight up to Mr. Dingwell's drawing-room, with a bunch of small keys in his hand, in his coat-pocket.

He had got just two steps into the room toward the little table on which the patient's desk stood, when from the other side of that piece of furniture, and the now open desk, there rose up the tall form of Mr. Jos. Larkin, of the Lodge.

The gentlemen eyed one another for a few seconds in silence, for the surprise was great. Mr. Larkin did not even set down the parcel of letters, which he had been sorting like a hand at whist, when Mr. Levi had stepped in to divert his attention.

"I thought, Mr. Larkinsh, I might as well drop in just to give you a lift," said Levi, with an elaborate bow, a politeness, and a great smile, that rather embarrassed the good attorney.

"Certainly, Mr. Levi, I'm always happy to see you—always happy to see *any* man—I have never done any thing I am ashamed of, nor shrunk from any duty, nor do I mean to do so now."

"Your hands looksh pretty full."

"Yes, sir, *pretty* tolerably full, sir," said Mr. Larkin, placing the letters on the desk; "and I may add so do *yours*, Mr. Levi; those keys, as you observe, might have given one a lift in opening this desk, had I not preferred the other course," said Mr. Larkin loftily, "of simply requesting Mr. Dingwell's friend, the lady at present in charge of his papers, to afford me, in her own discretion, such access to the papers possibly affecting my client, as I may consider necessary or expedient, as his legal adviser."

"You have changed your view of your duty, something; haven't you, Mr. Larkinsh?"

"No, sir, *no;* simply my action on a point of expediency. Of course, there was some weight, too, sir, in the suggestions made by a gentleman of Mr. Goldshed's experience and judgment; and I don't hesitate to say that his—his ideas had their proper weight with me. And I may say, once for all, Mr. Levi, I'll not be hectored, or lectured, or *bullied* by you, Mr. Levi," added Mr. Larkin, in a new style, feeling, perhaps, that his logical and moral vein was not quite so happy as usual.

"Don't frighten ush, Larkin, pray don't, only just give me leave to see what these letters is about," said Levi, taking his place by him; "did you put any of them in your pocket?"

"No, sir; upon my *soul*, Mr. Levi, I did no such thing," said Mr. Larkin, with a heartiness that had an effect upon the Jew. "The occasion is so serious that I hardly regret having used the expression," said Mr. Larkin, who had actually blushed at his own oath. "There was just one letter possibly worth looking at."

"That da-a-am foolish letter you wrote him to Constantinople?"

"I wrote him *no* foolish letter, sir. I wrote him no letter, sir, I should fear to have posted on the market cross, or read from the pulpit, Mr. Levi. I only wonder, knowing all you do of Mr. Dingwell's unfortunate temper, and reckless habits of assertion, that you should attach the smallest weight to an expression thrown out by him in one of his diabolical and—and—lamentable frenzies. As to my having abstracted a letter of his—an imputation at which I smile—I can, happily, cite evidence other than my own." He waved his hand toward Miss Rumble. "This lady has, happily, I will say, been in the room during my very brief examination of my client's half-dozen papers. Pray, madam, have I taken one of these—or, in fact, put it in my pocket?"

"No, sir, please," answered Miss Rumble, who spoke in good faith, having, with a lively remembrance of Mr. Dingwell's description of the three gentlemen who had visited the sick that day, as "three robbers," kept her eye very steadily upon the excellent Mr. Larkin, during the period of his search.

Mr. Levi would have liked to possess that

etter. It would have proved possibly a useful engine in the hands of the Firm in future dealings with the adroit and high-minded Mr. Larkin. It was not to be had, however, if it really existed at all; and when some more ironies and moralities had been fired off at both sides, the gentlemen subsided into their ordinary relations, and ultimately went away together to dine on turtle, sturgeon, salmon, and I know not what meats, at the famous "Three Roses" in Milk Lane.

CHAPTER LX.

MR. DINGWELL THINKS OF AN EXCURSION.

If Mr. Dingwell had been the most interesting, beautiful, and, I will add, wealthy of human beings, instead of being an ugly and wicked old bankrupt, Messrs. Goldshed, Levi and Larkin could not have watched the progress of his complaint with greater trepidation, or hailed the first unequivocal symptoms of his recovery with more genuine delight. I doubt if any one of them would have experienced the same intense happiness at the restoration of wife, child or parent.

They did not, it is true, re-assemble in Mr. Dingwell's apartments in Rosemary Court. There was not one of those gentlemen who did not set a proper value upon his own life; and they were content with the doctor's report. In due course, the oracle pronounced Mr. Dingwell out of danger, but insisted on change of air.

Well, that could be managed, of course. It *must* be managed, for did not the doctor say, that without it the patient might not ultimately recover. If it could have been dispensed with, the risk would have been wisely avoided. But Mr. Dingwell's recovery depended on it, and Mr. Dingwell must be *made* to recover.

Whither should they send him? Stolen treasure or murdered body is jealously concealed by the malefactor; but not more shrinkingly than was Mr. Dingwell by those gentlemen who had him in charge. Safe enough he was while he remained in his dingy seclusion in Rosemary Court, where he lay as snugly as Asmodeus in the magician's phial, and secure against all but some such accident as the irruption of the student Don Cleophas Leandro Peres Zambullo, through the sky-light. But where was to be found a rural habitation—salubrious and at the same time sufficiently secret. And if they did light upon one resembling that where the water-fiends played their pranks—

"On a wild moor, all brown and bleak,
Where broods the heath-frequenting grouse,
There stood a tenement antique—
Lord Hoppergollop's country house.

"Here silence reigned with lips of glue,
And undisturbed, maintained her law,
Save when the owl cried—'Whoo! whoo! whoo!'
Or the hoarse crow croaked—'Caw! caw! caw!'"

If, I say, they did find so eligible a mansion for their purpose, was it likely that their impracticable and incorrigible friend, Mr. Dingwell, would consent to spend six weeks in the "deserted mansion" as patiently as we are told Molly Dumpling did?

I think not. And when the doctor talked of country air, the patient joked peevishly about the "grove of chimneys," and "the sweet shady side of Pall Mall."

"I think, Mrs. Rumble," said he, one day, "I'm not going to die this bout at all events. I'm looking better, I think—eh?"

"Looking very bad, sir, please. I can't see no improvement," said Sarah Rumble.

"Well, ma'am, you try to keep my spirits up, thank you. I'm shut up too much—that's the sole cause of it *now*. If I could creep out a bit at night."

"God forbid, sir."

"Thank you, ma'am, again. I say if I could get out a little I should soon get my strength back again; but sitting in this great padded chair I might as well be in bed; can't go out in the day-time you know—too many enemies. The owl's been moulting, ma'am—devilish sick—the moulting owl. If the old bird could flutter out a bit. I'm living like a *monk*, I was going to say—egad, I wish I was. Give me those d—d bitters; they haven't done me a bit of good—thanks."

"If you was to go to the country, sir," insinuated Miss Sarah Rumble.

"Yes, if I *was*, as you express it, I should die in a week. If air could have killed me, the curious atmosphere of this charming court would have killed me long ago. I'm not one of those air-plants, ma'am. What I want is a little fillip, ma'am—a little amusement—any thing out of this prison; and I'm not going to squat on a moor, or to roost in a wood, to please a pack of fellows that don't care if I were on the treadmill, provided they could take me out whenever they want me. My health, indeed! They simply want me out of the way. My health! Their consideration for me is truly affecting. We'll not mind the bitters, yet. It's time for my claret."

He drank it, and seemed to doze for a little. Mrs. Rumble quickly settled the medicine bottles and other things that had been put out of their places, every now and then looking at the sunken face of the old man, in his death-like nap—his chin sunk on his breast, the stern carving of his massive forehead, the repulsive lines of a grim selfishness, and a certain evil shadow, made that face in its repose singularly unlovely.

Suddenly he waked.

"I say, Mrs. Rumble, I've been thinking—what about that old clergyman you mentioned—that Mr. Bartlett. I think I *will* see him—suppose he lectures me; his hard words won't break my bones, and I think he'd amuse me; so you may as well get him in, any time—I don't care when."

Sarah Rumble was only too glad to give her wicked tenant a chance, such as it was, and next day, at about one o'clock, a gentle-looking old

clergyman, with thin white hair, knocked at his door, and was admitted. It was the Rev. Thomas Bartlett.

"I can't rise, sir, to receive you—you'll excuse me; but I'm still very ill," said Mr. Dingwell.

"Pray don't stir, sir," said the clergyman.

"I *can't*," said Mr. Dingwell. "Will *you* kindly sit in that chair, near the fire? What I have to say is private, and if you please, we'll speak very low. My head isn't recovered yet."

"Certainly," said the old gentleman, placing himself as Dingwell wished.

"Thank you very much, sir. Now I can manage it. Isn't your name Thomas, sir—the Reverend Thomas Bartlett?" said Mr. Dingwell, looking at him shrewdly from under his white eyebrows.

"That's my name, sir."

"*My* name's Dingwell. You don't remember? I'll try to bring it to your mind. About twenty-nine years ago you were one of the curates at St. Wyther's in the Fields?"

"Yes, sir, I was," answered the clergyman, fixing his eyes in turn inquisitively on him.

"I was the witness—do you remember me, now—to the ceremony, when that unfortunate fellow, Verney, married Miss—I have a note of her name—hang it!—Rebecca, was it?—*Yes, Rebecca*—it was Rebecca Mervyn. You married Verney to Miss Mervyn, and *I* witnessed it."

"I remember very well, sir, that a gentleman did accompany Mr. Verney; and I remember the marriage extremely well, because there occurred very distressing circumstances respecting that Mr. Verney not very long after, which fixed that marriage in my mind; but having seen you once only, sir, I can't pretend to recollect your face."

"There has been some time, too, sir, since then," said Mr. Dingwell, with a cynical sneer, and a shrug. "But I think I should have recognized you; that's perhaps owing to my having a remarkably retentive memory for faces; however, it's of no great consequence here. It isn't a matter of identification at all. I only want to know, as Verney's dead, whether you can tell what has become of that poor lady, or can find any clue to her whereabouts—there was a baby—a little child—if they are still living."

"She did write to me twice, sir, within a few years after the marriage. He treated her very ill, sir," said the clergyman.

"Infamously, I fancy," said Dingwell; "and how long ago was that, sir?"

"Oh! a long time; twenty—ay, five—ay, eight-and-twenty years since," said the old gentleman.

Dingwell laughed.

His visitor stared.

"Yes, it's a good while," said Mr. Dingwell; "and looking over that gulf, sir, you may fill your glass, and sing—

"'Many a lad I liked is dead,
And many a lass grown old.'

Eight-and-twenty years! Gad, sir, she's had time to grow gray; and to be dead and buried; and to serve a handsome period of her term in purgatory. I forgot, though; you don't follow me there. I was thinking of the French *emi*, who made part of my journey here with me."

"No, sir; Church of England, thank God; the purest faith; the most scriptural, I believe, on earth. You, sir, I assume, are of the same Church," said he.

"Well, I can't say I am, sir; nor a Catholic, nor a Quaker," said the invalid.

"I hope, sir, there's no tendency to rationalism?"

"No, sir, I thank you; to no ism whatsoever invented by any other man; Dingwellism for Dingwell; Smithism for Smith. Every man has a right to his opinion, in my poor judgment."

"And pray, sir, if neither Romanist nor Protestant, what *are* you?" inquired the clergyman, as having a right to ask.

"*Porcus de grege epicuri*, at your service," said the sick man, with a feeble smirk.

"I had hoped, sir, it might have been for some profitable purpose you had sent for me," said the disappointed pastor.

"Well, sir, I was baptized in the Church of England, although I don't subscribe the Articles; so I served in your regiment, you see, though I don't wear the uniform any longer."

"I thought, sir, you might have wished some conversation upon religious subjects."

"And haven't we had it, sir?—sorry we don't agree. I'm too old to turn out of my own way: but, though I can't learn yours, I shall be happy to teach you something of mine, if you wish it."

"I think, sir, as I have other calls to make," said the old clergyman, much offended, and rising to take his leave as he spoke, "I had better wish you a good-afternoon."

"Pray, sir, stay a moment; I never knew a clergyman in such a hurry before to leave a sick man; as no man knows, according to your theory, when he's going to be converted—and how should I? The mildew of death is whitening each of us at this moment; the last golden sands are running out. D— it, give me a chance."

This incongruous harangue was uttered so testily—even fiercely—that the good clergyman was puzzled, and began to doubt in what state his fever might have left Mr. Dingwell's brain.

"Don't you see, sir? Do sit down—a little patience won't do either of us any harm."

"Certainly, sir," hesitated the clergyman, looking hard at him, "but I have not a great deal of time."

"Nor I a great deal of strength; I shan't keep you long, sir."

The Rev. Thomas Bartlett sat down again, and glanced meekly an invitation to Mr. Dingwell to begin.

"Nine-and-twenty years, sir, since you married that unlucky pair. Now, I need not say by what particular accidents, for the recollection is painful, I was in after-life thrown into the

iety of that unfortunate ill-used dog, poor thur Verney; I knew him intimately. I was ı only friend he had left, and I was with him en he died, infamously neglected by all his nily. He had just got his half-yearly pay- ınt of a beggarly annuity, on which he sub- ted; *he*—the rightful Viscount Verney, and ı head of his family—ha, ha, ha! By Jove, , I can't help laughing, though I pity him. ıving that little sum in his hand, said he to ı, 'You take charge of this for my son, if you ı find him; and I rely on your friendship to ık him up if ever you revisit England; this is him; and he was baptized by the Rev. ıomas Bartlett, as my wife wrote to tell me just ght-and-twenty years ago, and he, no doubt, n enable you to trace him.' That's what *he* id—what say *you*, sir?"

"Old Lady Verney placed the child in charge the gentleman who then managed the Verney operty. I heard all about it from a Mr. 'ynne Williams, a Welsh lawyer. The child ed when only a year old; you know *he* would ıve been the heir apparent."

"Poor Arthur said *no*, sir. I asked him—a cotch marriage, or some of those crooked wed- cks on which they found bigamies and illegiti- acies. 'No,' Arthur said, 'he has no technic- case, and he may be miserably poor; this is l I can do, and I charge you with it.' It was ery solemn, sir. Where does that lawyer live?"

"At this moment I can't recollect, sir—some ıace near which the Verneys have estates."

"Cardyllian?"

"The very place, sir."

"I know it, sir; I've been there when I was boy. And his name was *Wynne* Williams?"

"I *think* it was," said the clergyman.

"And you have nothing more to say about ıe poor child?" asked Mr. Dingwell.

"There *is* nothing more, I fancy, sir," said Ir. Bartlett. "Can I give you any more in ormation?"

"Not any, sir, that I can think of at present. Iany thanks, Mr. Bartlett, for your obliging all. Wait a moment for the servant."

And Mr. Dingwell, thinking fiercely, rang his ıand-bell long and viciously.

"Ha! Mrs. Rumble; you'll show this gen- leman out. Good-bye, sir, and many thanks."

"Good-day, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha! It's a good subject, and a ertile!" muttered Mr. Dingwell, so soon as he was alone.

For the rest of that evening Mr Dingwell seemed to find ample amusement in his own thoughts, and did not trouble Mrs. Rumble with that contemptuous and cynical banter, which she was obliged to accept, when he pleased, for conversation.

The only thing she heard him say was—"I'll go *there*."

Now Malory had already been proved to be a safe hiding-place for a gentleman in Mr. Dingwell's uncomfortable circumstances. The air was unexceptionable, and Lord Verney was easily persuaded to permit the old man to sojourn, for a few weeks, in the steward's house, under the care of old Mrs. Mervyn's servant, aided by one provided by Messrs. Goldshed & Levi.

There were two rooms in the steward's house which old Mrs. Mervyn never used, and some furniture removed from the dower house adjoining, rendered them tolerably comfortable. A letter from old Lady Verney opened and explained the request, which amounted to a command, that she would permit the invalid, in whom Lord Verney took an interest, to occupy, for a fortnight or so, the spare rooms in the steward's house.

So all was made ready, and the day fixed for Mr. Dingwell's arrival.

CHAPTER LXI.

A SURPRISE.

Mr. Dingwell, already much more like himself, having made the journey by easy stages, was approaching Malory by night, in a post-chaise. Fatigue, sickness, or some other cause, perhaps, exasperated his temper specially that night.

Well made up in mufflers, his head was frequently out at the window.

"The old church, by Jove!" he muttered, with a dismal grin, as going slowly down the jolty hill, beneath the ancient trees, the quaint little church of Llanderris and its quiet churchyard appeared at the left of the narrow road, white in the moonlight.

"A new crop of fools, fanatics, and hypocrites come up, since I remember them, and the old ones gone down to enrich that patch of ground and send up their dirty juice in nettles, and thistles, and docks. 'In sure and certain hope' Why should not they, the swine! as well as their masters, cunning, and drunken, and sneaks. I'd like to pay a fellow to cut their epitaphs. Why should I spare them a line of truth. Here I am, plain Mr. Dingwell. They don't care much about me; and when my Lord Verney went down the other day, to show them what a fool they have got for a master, amid congenial rejoicings, I don't hear that they troubled their heads with many regrets for my poor friend Arthur. Ha! There's the estuary, and Pendillion. These things don't change, my Lord Verney. Pity Lord Verney doesn't wear as well as Pendillion. There is Ware, over the water, if we had light to see it—to think of that shabby little whey-faced fool! Here we are; these are the trees of Malory, egad!"

And with a shrug he repeated Homer's words, which say—"As are the generations of leaves, such are those of men."

Up the avenue of Malory they were driving, and Dingwell looked out with a dismal curiosity upon the lightless front of the old house.

"Cheerful reception!" he muttered. "Suppose we pick a hole in your title—a hole in your *pocket*—hey!"

Dingwell's servant was at the door of the steward's house as they drew up, and helped the snarling old invalid down.

When he got to the room the servant said—

"There's coffee, and every thing as you desired."

"I'll take breath first, if you please—coffee afterward."

"Mrs. Mervyn hopes, sir, as how you'll parding her to-night, being so late, and not in good 'ealth herself, which she would been hup to receive you hotherwise," said the man, delivering his message eloquently.

"Quite time enough to-morrow, and to-morrow—and to-morrow; and I don't care if our meeting creeps away, as that remarkable person, William Shakespeare, says—'in this petty pace.' This is more comfortable, egad! than Rosemary Court. I don't care, I say, if it creeps in that petty pace, till we are both in heaven. What's Hecuba to me, or I to Hecuba? So help me off with these things."

Lord Verney, on whom, in his moods, Mr. Dingwell commented so fully, was dispensing his hospitalities just then, on the other side of the estuary, at his princely mansion of Ware. The party was, it is true, small—very small, in fact. Lady Wimbledon had been there, and the Hon. Caroline Oldys, but they were now visiting Cardyllian at the Verney Arms.

Mr. Jos. Larkin, to his infinite content, was at Ware, and deplored the unchristian feelings displayed by Mr. Wynne Williams, whom he had by this time formally supplanted in the management of Lord Verney's country affairs, and who had exhibited "a nasty feeling," he "might say a petulance quite childish," last Sunday, when Mr. Larkin had graced Cardyllian Church with his personal devotions, and refused to vacate, in his favor, the small pew which he held as proprietor of Plasdwllyn, but which Mr. Larkin chose to think he occupied in virtue of his former position of solicitor to Lord Verney.

Cleve Verney being still in London, received one morning from his uncle the following short and astounding note, as he sat at breakfast:

"My Dear Cleve:—The time having arrived for taking that step, which the stability of our house of Verney has long appeared to demand, all preliminaries being satisfactorily adjusted, and the young lady and Lady Wimbledon, with a very small party of their relations, as you may have observed by the public papers, at present at the hotel of Cardyllian, nothing remains unaccomplished by way of preparation, but your presence at Ware, which I shall expect on Friday next, when you can meet Miss Caroline Oldys in those new and more defined relations which our contemplated alliance suggests. That event is arranged to take place on the Wednesday following. Mr. Larkin, who reports to me the substance of a conversation with you, and who has my instructions to apprise you fully of any details you may desire to be informed of, will see you on the morning of to-morrow, in the library at Verney House, at a quarter past eleven o'clock. He leaves Ware by the mail train to-night. You will observe that the marriage, though not strictly private, is to be conducted without *éclat*, and has not been anywhere announced. This will explain my not inviting you to bring down any friend of yours to Ware for the occasion."

So it ends with the noble lord's signature, and a due attestation of the state of his affections toward Cleve.

With the end of his uncle's letter, an end of that young gentleman's breakfast—only just begun—came also.

Cleve did not start up and rap out an oath. On the contrary, he sat very still, with something almost a smile, on his pale, patient face. For a little while he folded the letter up gently, and put it in his pocket. Then he did get up and go to the window looking out upon the piece of ground at the rear of Verney House, and the sooty leaves and sparrows that beautified it. For a long time he enjoyed that view, and then took a swift walk for nearly half an hour in the streets—drowsy, formal streets—in that quarter of the town, involving little risk of interruption.

His wife—what a hell was now in that word! and why? Another man would have found in it a fountain of power and consolation. His wife, his little boy, were now in France. He thought of them both sourly enough. He was glad they were so far off. Margaret would have perceived the misery of his mind. She would have been poking questions at him, and he would neither have divulged nor in any case have consulted her. In the motive of this reserve, which harmonized with his character, may have mingled a suspicion that *his* interest and hers might not, in this crisis, have required quite the same treatment.

It was about eleven o'clock as he entered Verney House again. In a quarter of an hour more that villainous attorney, to whose vulgar machinations he attributed his present complicated wretchedness, would be with him.

Without any plan, only hating that abominable Christian, and resolved to betray neither thought nor emotion which could lead him to suspect ever so faintly, the truth, he at length heard him announced, as a man who has seen his death-warrant hears the approach of the executioner. Mr. Larkin entered, with his well-brushed hat in his hand, his bald head shining as with a glory, a meek smile on his lips, a rat-like shrinking observation in his eyes.

"Oh. Mr. Larkin," said Mr. Cleve Verney, with a smile. "My uncle said you would look in to-day. We have often talked the matter over together, you know, my uncle and I, and I'm not sure that you can tell me very much that I don't know already. Sit down, pray."

"Thanks. I think it was chiefly to let you know what he can do for *you*. I need not say to you, my dear Mr. Verney, how generous Lord

Verney is, and what an uncle, Mr. Verney, he has been to *you*."

Here was a little glance of the pink eyes at the ceiling, and a momentary elevation of his large hand, and a gentle, admiring shake of the bald head.

"No; of course. It is entirely as his attorney, sir, acquainted with details which he has directed you to mention to me, that he speaks of your call here. I had a letter this morning."

"Quite so. It was to mention that although he could not, of course, in prudence, under the circumstances, think of *settling* any thing—which amounts, in fact, to an alienation—a step which, in justice to himself and the integrity of the family estates, he could not concede or contemplate; he yet—and he wishes it at the same time to be understood, strictly, as his present intention—means to make you an allowance of a thousand pounds a year."

"Rather a small allowance, don't you think, for a man with a seat in the House to marry on?" observed Cleve.

"Pardon me; but he does not contemplate your immediate marriage, Mr. Verney," answered Larkin.

"Rather a sudden change of plan, considering that he fixed Wednesday next, by his letter," said Cleve, with a faint sneer.

"Pardon me, again; but that referred to his own marriage — Lord Verney's contemplated marriage with the Honorable Miss Oldys."

"Oh!" said Cleve, looking steadily down on the table. "Oh! to be sure."

"That alliance will be celebrated on Wednesday, as proposed."

Mr. Larkin paused, and Cleve felt that his odious eyes were reading his countenance. Cleve could not help turning pale, but there was no other visible symptom of his dismay.

"Yes; the letter was a little confused. He has been urging me to marry, and I fancied he had made up his mind to expedite my affair; and it is rather a relief to me to be assured it is his own, for I'm in no particular hurry—quite the reverse. Is there any thing more?"

"I meant to ask *you* that question, Mr. Verney. I fancied you might possibly wish to put some questions to me. I have been commissioned, within certain limits, to give you any information you may desire." Mr. Larkin paused again.

Cleve's blood boiled. "Within certain limits, more in my uncle's confidence than I am, that vulgar, hypocritical attorney!" He fancied besides that Mr. Larkin saw what a shock the news was, and that he liked, with a mean sense of superiority, making him feel that he penetrated his affectation of indifference.

"It's very thoughtful of you; but if any thing strikes me I shall talk to my uncle. There are subjects that would interest me more than those on which he would be at all likely to talk with you."

"Quite possibly," said Mr. Larkin. "And what shall I report to his lordship as the result of our conversation?"

"Simply the truth, sir."

"I don't, I fear, make myself clear. I meant to ask whether there was any thing you wished me to add. You can always reckon upon me, Mr. Verney, to convey your views to Lord Verney, if there should ever happen to be any thing you feel a delicacy about opening to his lordship yourself."

"Yes, I shall write to him," answered Cleve, dryly.

And Cleve Verney rose, and the attorney, simpering and bowing grandly, took his departure.

CHAPTER LXII.

CLAY RECTORY BY MOONLIGHT.

As the attorney made his astounding announcement, Cleve had felt as if his brain, in vulgar parlance, *turned!* In a moment the world in which he had walked and lived from his school-days passed away, and a chasm yawned at his feet. His whole future was subverted. A man who dies in delusion, and awakes not to celestial music and the light of paradise, but to the trumpet of judgment and the sight of the abyss, will quail as Cleve did.

How he so well maintained the appearance of self-possession while Mr. Larkin remained, I can't quite tell. Pride, however, which has carried so many quivering souls, with an appearance of defiance, through the press-room to the drop, supported him.

But now that scoundrel was gone. The fury that fired him, the iron constraint that held him firm was also gone, and Cleve despaired.

Till this moment, when he was called on to part with it all, he did not suspect how entirely his ambition was the breath of his nostrils, or how mere a sham was the sort of talk to which he had often treated Margaret and others about an emigrant's life and the Arcadian liberty of the Antipodes.

The House-of-Commons life—the finest excitement on earth—the growing fame, the peerage, the premiership in the distance—the vulgar fingers of Jos. Larkin had just dropped the extinguisher upon the magic lamp that had showed him these dazzling illusions, and he was left to grope and stumble in the dark among his debts, with an obscure wife on his arm, and a child to plague him also. And this was to be the end! A precarious thousand a year—dependent on the caprice of a narrow, tyrannical old man, with a young wife at his ear, and a load of debts upon Cleve's shoulders, as he walked over the quag!

It is not well to let any object, apart from heaven, get into your head and fill it. Cleve had not that vein of insanity which on occasion draws men to suicide. In the thread of his destiny that fine black strand was not spun. So blind and deep for a while was his plunge

into despair, that I think that had that atrabilious poison, which throws out its virus as suddenly as latent plague, and lays a *felo-de-se* to cool his heels and his head in God's prison, the grave—had a drop or two, I say, of that elixir of death been mingled in his blood, I don't think he would ever have seen another morrow.

But Cleve was not thinking of dying. He was sure—in rage, and blasphemy, and torture, it might be—but still he *was* sure to live on. Well, what was now to be done? Every power must be tasked to prevent the ridiculous catastrophe which threatened him with ruin; neither scruple, nor remorse, nor conscience, nor compunction should stand in the way. We are not to suppose that he is about to visit the Hon. Miss Caroline Oldys with a dagger in one hand and a cup of poison in the other, nor with gunpowder to blow up his uncle and Ware, as some one did Darnley and the house of Kirk of Field. Simply his mind was filled with the one idea, that one way or another the thing *must* be stopped.

It was long before his ideas arranged themselves, and for a long time after no plan of operations which had a promise of success suggested itself. When at length he did decide, you would have said no wilder or wickeder scheme could have entered his brain.

It was a moonlight night. The scene a flat country, with a monotonous row of poplars crossing it. This long file of formal trees marks the line of a canal, fronting which at a distance of about a hundred yards stands a lonely brick house, with a few sombre elms rising near it; a light mist hung upon this expansive flat. The soil must have been unproductive, so few farmsteads were visible for miles around. Here and there pools of water glimmered coldly in the moonlight; and patches of rushes and reeds made the fields look ragged and neglected.

Here and there, too, a stunted hedge-row showed dimly along the level, otherwise unbroken, and stretching away into the haze of the horizon. It is a raw and dismal landscape, where a murder might be done, and the scream lose itself in distance unheard—where the highwayman, secure from interruption, might stop and plunder the chance wayfarer at his leisure—a landscape which a fanciful painter would flank with a distant row of gibbets.

The front of this square brick house, with a little enclosure, hardly two yards in depth, and a wooden paling in front, and with a green moss growing damply on the piers and the door-steps, and tinging the mortar between the bricks, looks out upon a narrow old road, along which just then were audible the clink and rattle of an approaching carriage and horses.

It was past one o'clock. No hospitable light shone from the windows, which on the contrary looked out black and dreary upon the vehicle and steaming horses which pulled up in front of the house.

Out got Cleve and reconnoitered.

"Are you quite sure?"

"Clay Parsonage—yes, sir," said the driver.

Cleve shook the little wooden gate, which was locked; so he climbed the paling, and knocked and rang loud and long at the hall-door.

The driver at last reported a light in an upper window.

Cleve went on knocking and ringing, and the head of the Rev. Isaac Dixie appeared high in the air over the window-stool.

"What do you want, pray?" challenged this suave clergyman from his sanctuary.

"It's I—Cleve Verney. Why do you go to bed at such hours? I must see you for a moment."

"Dear me! my dear, valued pupil! Who could have dreamed? I shall be down in a moment."

"Thanks—I'll wait;" and then to the driver he said—"I shan't stay five minutes; mind you're ready to start with me the moment I return."

Now the hall-door opened. The Rev. Isaac Dixie—for his dress was a compromise between modesty and extreme haste, and necessarily very imperfect—stood in greater part behind the hall-door; a bedroom candlestick in his fingers, smiling blandly on his "distinguished pupil," who entered without a smile, without a greeting—merely saying—

"Where shall we sit down for a minute, old Dixie?"

Holding his hand with the candle in it across so as to keep his flowing dressing-gown together; and with much wonder and some misgivings, yet contriving his usual rosy smile, he conducted his unexpected visitor into his "study."

"I've so many apologies to offer, my very honored and dear friend; this is so miserable, and I fear you are cold. We must get something; we must, really, manage something—some little refreshment."

Dixie placed the candle on the chimney-piece, and looked inquiringly on Cleve.

"There's some sherry, I know, and I think there's some brandy."

"There's no one up and about?" inquired Cleve.

"Not a creature," said the rector; "no one can hear a word, and these are good thick walls."

"I've only a minute; I know you'd like to be a bishop, Dixie?"

Cleve, with his muffler and his hat still on, was addressing the future prelate, with his elbow on the chimney-piece.

"*Nolo episcopari*, of course, but we know you would, and there's no time now for pretty speeches. Now, listen, you shall be *that*, and you shall reach it by two steps—the two best livings in our gift. I always keep my word; and when I set my heart on a thing I bring it about, and so sure as I do any good, I'll bend all my interest to that one object."

The Rev. Isaac Dixie stared hard at him, for Cleve looked strangely, and spoke as sternly as a villain demanding his purse. The Rector of Clay looked horribly perplexed. His countenance seemed to ask, "Does he mean to give me a mitre or to take my life, or is he quite right in his head?"

"You think I don't mean what I say, or that I'm talking nonsense, or that I'm mad. I'm not mad, it's no nonsense, and no man was ever more resolved to do what he says." And Cleve, who was not given to swearing, did swear a fierce oath. "But all this is not for nothing; there's a condition; you must do me a service. It won't cost you much—less trouble, almost, than you've taken for me to-night, but you *must* do it."

"And may I, my dear and valued pupil, may I ask?" began the reverend gentleman.

"No, you need not ask, for I'll tell you. It's the same sort of service you did for me in France," said Cleve.

"Ah! ah!" ejaculated the clergyman, very uneasily. "For no one but *you*, my dear and admirable pupil, could I have brought myself to take that step, and I trust that you will on reconsideration—"

"You *must* do what I say," said Cleve, looking and speaking with the same unconscious sternness, which frightened the rector more than any amount of bluster. "I hardly suppose you want to break with me finally, and you don't quite know all the consequences of that step, I fancy."

"Break with *you?* my admirable patron! desert my dear and brilliant pupil in an emergency? *Certainly* not. Reckon upon me, my dear Mr. Verney, when*ever* you need my poor services, to the *uttermost*. To *you all* my loyalty is due, but unless you make a very special point of it, I should hesitate for any other person living, *but* yourself, to incur a second time—"

"Don't you think, my dear, d—d old friend, I understand the length, and breadth, and depth of your friendship? I know how strong it *is*, and I'll make it *stronger*. It *is* for *me*—yes, in my own case you must repeat the service, as you call it, which you once did me, in another country."

The Rev. Isaac Dixie's rosy cheeks mottled all over blue and yellow; he withdrew his hand from his dressing-gown, with an unaffected gesture of fear; and he fixed a terrified gaze upon Cleve Verney's eyes, which did not flinch, but encountered his, darkly and fixedly, with a desperate resolution.

"Why, you look as much frightened as if I asked you to commit a crime; you marvelous old fool, you hardly think me mad enough for *that?*"

"I hardly know, Mr, Verney, what I think," said Dixie, looking with a horrible helplessness into his face. "Good God! sir, it can't be any thing *wrong?*"

"Come, come, sir; you're more than half asleep. Do you *dare* to think I'd commit myself to any man, by such an idiotic proposal? No one but a lunatic could think of *blasting* himself, as you—but you *can't* suppose it. Do listen, and understand if you can; my wife, to whom you married me, is *dead*, six months ago she *died;* I tell you she's *dead*."

"Dear me! I'm very much pained, and I will say *shocked;* the deceased lady, I should not, my dear pupil, have alluded to, of course; but need I say, I never heard of that affliction?"

"How on earth could you? You don't suppose, knowing all you do, I'd put it in the papers among the *deaths?*"

"No, dear me, of course," said the Rev. Isaac Dixie, hastily bringing his dressing-gown again together. "No, certainly."

"I don't think that sort of publication would answer you or me. You forget it is two years ago and more, a *good deal* more. *I* don't though, and whatever *you* may, *I* don't want my uncle to know any thing about it."

"But, you know, I only meant, you hadn't told me; my dear Mr. Verney, my honored pupil, you will see—don't you perceive how much is involved; but *this—couldn't* you put this upon some one else? Do—*do* think."

"No, in *no* one's power, but *yours*, Dixie;" and Cleve took his hand, looking in his face, and wrung it so hard that the reverend gentleman almost winced under the pressure, of administering which I dare say Cleve was quite unconscious. "No one but *you*."

"The poor—the respected lady—being deceased, of course you'll give me a note to that effect under your hand; you'll have no objection, in this case, to my taking out a special license?"

"Special devil! are you mad? Why, any one could do it with that. No, it's just because it is a little *irregular*, nothing more, and exacts implicit mutual confidence, that I have chosen you for it."

Dixie looked as if the compliment was not an unmixed pleasure.

"I still think, that—that having performed the other, there is some awkwardness, and the penalties are awful," said he with increasing uneasiness, "and it does strike me, that if my dear Mr. Verney could place his hand upon some other humble friend, in this particular case, the advantages would be obvious."

"Come, Dixie," said Cleve, "I'm *going;* you must say yes or no, and so decide whether you have seen the last of me; I can't spend the night giving you my reasons, but they are conclusive. If you act like a man of sense, it's the last service I shall ever require at your hands, and I'll reward you *splendidly;* if you don't, I not only cease to be your friend, but I become your *enemy*. I can strike when I like it—you know *that;* and upon my soul I'll smash you. I shall see my uncle to-morrow morning at Ware, and I'll tell him distinctly the entire of that French transaction."

"But—but pray, my dear Mr. Verney, do say, *did* I refuse—*do* I *object?* you may command me, of course. I have incurred I may say a risk for you already, a risk in *form*."

"Exactly, *in form;* and you don't increase it by this kindness, and you secure my eternal gratitude. Now you speak like a man of sense. You must be in Cardyllian to-morrow evening. It is possible I may ask *nothing* of you; if I do, the utmost is a technical irregularity, and secrecy, which we are both equally interested in observing. You shall stay a week in Cardyllian, mind, and I, of course, frank you there and back, and while you remain—it's my business. It has a political aspect, as I shall explain to you by and by, and so soon as I shall have brought my uncle round, and can avow it, it will lead the way rapidly to *your* fortune. Shall I see you in Cardyllian to-morrow evening?"

"Agreed, sir!—agreed, my dear Mr. Verney. I shall be there, my dear and valued pupil—*yes*."

"Go to the Verney Arms; I shall probably be looking out for you there; at all events I shall see you before night."

Verney looked at his watch, and repeated "I shall see you to-morrow;" and without taking leave, or hearing as it seemed the Rev. Isaac Dixie's farewell compliments and benedictions, he walked out in gloomy haste, as if the conference was not closed, but only suspended by the approaching parenthesis of a night and a day.

From the hall-table the obsequious divine took the key of the little gate, to which, in slippers and dressing-gown, he stepped blandly forth, and having let out his despotic pupil, and waved his adieu, as the chaise drove away, he returned, and locked up his premises and house, with a great load at his heart.

CHAPTER LXIII.

AN ALARM.

Cleve reached the station, eight miles away from the dismal swamp I have described, in time to catch the mail train. From Llwynan he did not go direct to Ware, but drove instead to Cardyllian, and put up at the Verney Arms early next morning.

By ten o'clock he was seen, sauntering about the streets, talking with old friends, and popping into the shops and listening to the gossip of the town. Cleve had a sort of friendliness that answered all electioneering purposes perfectly, and *that* was the measure of its value.

Who should he light upon in Castle Street but Tom Sedley! They must have arrived by the same train at Llwynan. The sight of Tom jarred intensely upon Cleve Verney's nerves. There was something so strange in his looks and manner that Sedley thought him ill. He stopped for a while to talk with him at the corner of Church Street, but seemed so obviously disposed to escape from him, that Sedley did not press his society, but acquiesced with some disgust and wonder in their new relations.

Tom Sedley had been with Wynne Williams about poor Vane Etherage's affairs. Honest Wynne Williams was in no mood to flatter Lord Verney, the management of whose affairs he had, he said, "resigned." The fact was that he had been, little by little, so uncomfortably superseded in his functions by our good friend Jos. Larkin, and the fashion of Lord Verney's countenance was so manifestly changed, that honest Wynne Williams felt that he might as well do a proud thing, and resign, as wait a little longer for the inevitable humiliation of dismissal.

"I'm afraid my friend the admiral is in bad hands; worse hands than Larkin's he could hardly have fallen into. I could tell you things of that fellow, if we had time—of course strictly between ourselves, you know—that would open your eyes. And as to his lordship—well, I suppose most people know something of Lord Verney. I owe him nothing, you know; it's all ended between us, and I wash my hands of him and his concerns. You may talk to him, if you like; but you'll find you might as well argue with the tide in the estuary there. I'd be devilish glad if I could be of any use; but you see how it is; and to tell you the truth, I'm afraid it must come to a regular smash, unless Lord Verney drops that nasty litigation. There are some charges, you know, upon the property already; and with that litigation hanging over it, I don't see how he's to get money to pay those calls. It's a bad business, I'm afraid, and an awful pity. Poor old fellow!—a little bit rough, but devilish good-hearted."

Tom Sedley went up to Hazelden. The Etherage girls knew he was coming, and were watching for him at the top of the steep walk.

"I've been talking, as I said I would, to Wynne Williams this morning," he said, after greetings and inquiries made and answered, "and he had not any thing important to advise; but he has promised to think over the whole matter."

"And Wynne Williams is *known* to be the cleverest lawyer *in the world*," exclaimed Miss Charity, exulting. "I was afraid, on account of his having been so lately Lord Verney's adviser, that he would not have been willing to consult with you. And *will* he use his influence, which must be very great, with Lord Verney?"

"He has none; and he thinks it would be quite useless my talking to him."

"Oh! Is it possible? Well, if he said that, I *never* heard *such* nonsense in the course of my life. I think old Lord Verney was *one of the very nicest* men I *ever* spoke to in the course of my life; and I'm certain it is all that horrid Mr Larkin, and a great mistake; for Lord Verney is quite a gentleman, and would not do any thing so *despicable* as to worry and injure papa by this horrid business, if only you would make him understand it; and I *do* think, Thomas Sedley, you *might* take that trouble for papa."

"I'll go over to Ware, and try to see Lord Verney, if you think my doing so can be of the least use," said Tom, who knew the vanity of arguing with Miss Charity.

"Oh, *do*," said pretty Agnes, and that entreaty was, of course, a command; so without going up to see old Etherage, who was very much broken and ill, his daughters said; and hoping possibly to have some cheering news on his return, Tom Sedley took his leave for the present, and from the pier of Cardyllian crossed in a boat to Ware.

On the spacious steps of that palatial mansion, as Mr. Larkin used to term it, stood Lord Verney, looking grandly seaward, with compressed eyes, like a near-sighted gentleman as he was.

"Oh! is she all right;" said Lord Verney.

"I—I don't know, Lord Verney," replied Tom Sedley. "I came to—"

"Oh—aw—Mr.—Mr.—how d'ye do, sir," said Lord Verney, with marked frigidity, not this time giving him the accustomed finger.

"I came, Lord Verney, hoping you might possibly give me five minutes, and a very few words, about that unfortunate business of poor Mr. Vane Etherage."

"I'm unfortunately just going out in a boat—about it; and I can't just now afford time, Mr.—a—Mr.—"

"*Sedley* is my name," suggested Sedley, who knew that Lord Verney remembered him perfectly.

"Sedley—Mr. Sedley; yes. As I mentioned, I'm going in a boat. I'm sorry I can't possibly oblige you; and it is very natural you, who are so intimate, I believe, with Mr. Etherage, should take that side of the question—about it; but *I've* no reason to call those proceedings unfortunate; and—and I don't anticipate—and, in fact, people usually look after their own concerns—about it." Lord Verney, standing on the steps, was looking over Sedley's head, as he spoke, at the estuary and the shipping there.

"I'm sure, Lord Verney, if you knew how utterly ruinous, how really *deplorable*, the consequences of pursuing this thing—I mean the lawsuit against him—may be—I am *sure*—you would stop it all."

Honest Tom spoke in the belief that in the hesitation that had marked the close of the noble lord's remarks there was a faltering of purpose, whereas there was simply a failure of ideas.

"I can't help your forming opinions, sir, though I have not invited their expression upon my concerns and—and affairs. If you have any thing to communicate about those proceedings, you had better see Mr. Larkin, my attorney; he's the proper person. Mr. Etherage has taken a line in the county to wound and injure me, as, of course, he has a perfect right to do; he has taken that line, and I don't see any reason why I should not have what I'm entitled to. There's the principle of government by party, you're aware; and we've not to ask favors of those we seek to wound and injure—about it; and that's my view, and idea, and fixed opinion. I must wish you good-morning, Mr. Sedley. I'm going down to my boat, and I decline distinctly any conversation upon the subject of my law business; I decline it *distinctly*, Mr. Sedley—about it," repeated the peer peremptorily; and as he looked a good deal incensed, Tom Sedley wisely concluded it was time to retire; and so his embassage came to an end.

Lord Verney crossed the estuary in his yacht, consulting his watch from time to time, and reconnoitering the green and pier of Cardyllian through his telescope with considerable interest. A little group was assembled near the stair, among whose figures he saw Lady Wimbledon. "Why is not Caroline there?" he kept asking himself, and all the time searching that little platform for the absent idol of his heart.

Let us deal mercifully with this antiquated romance; and if Miss Caroline Oldys forebore to say, "Go up, thou baldhead," let us also spare the amorous incongruity. Does any young man love with the self-abandonment of an old one? Is any romance so romantic as the romance of an old man? When Sancho looked over his shoulder, and saw his master in his shirt, cutting capers and tumbling head-over-heels, and tearing his hair in his love-madness, that wise governor and man of proverbs forgot the grotesqueness of the exhibition in his awe of that vehement adoration. So let us. When does this noble frenzy exhibit itself in such maudlin transports, and with a self-sacrifice so idolatrously suicidal, as in the old? Seeing, then, that the spirit is so prodigiously willing, let us bear with the spectacle of their infirmities, and when one of these sighing, magnanimous, wrinkled Philanders goes by, let us not hiss, but rather say kindly, "*Vive la bagatelle!*" or, as we say in Ireland, "More power!"

He was disappointed. Miss Caroline Oldys had a very bad headache, Lady Wimbledon said, and was in her room, in care of her maid, *so* miserable at losing the charming sail to Malory.

Well, the lover was sorely disappointed, as we have said; but there was nothing for it but submission, and to comfort himself with the assurances of Lady Wimbledon that Caroline's headaches never lasted long, and that she was always better for a long time, when they were over. This latter piece of information seemed to puzzle Lord Verney.

"Miss Oldys is always better after an attack than before it," said Cleve, interpreting for his uncle.

"Why, of *course*. That's what Lady Wimbledon means, as *I* understand it," said Lord Verney, a little impatiently. "It's very sad; you must tell me all about it; but we may hope to find her, you say, quite recovered when we return?"

Cleve was not of the party to Malory. He returned to the Verney Arms. He went up to Lady Wimbledon's drawing-room with a book he had promised to lend her, and found Miss Caroline Oldys.

Yes, she was better. He was very earnest and tender in his solicitudes. He was looking ill, and was very melancholy.

Two hours after her maid came in to know whether she "pleased to want any thing?" and she would have sworn that Miss Caroline had been crying. Mr. Cleve had got up from beside her, and was looking out of the window.

A little later in the day, old Lady Calthorpe, a cousin of Lady Wimbledon's, very feeble and fussy, and babbling in a querulous treble, was pushed out in her Bath-chair, Cleve and Miss Caroline Oldys accompanying, to the old castle of Cardyllian.

On the step of the door of the Verney Arms, as they emerged, whom should they meet, descending from the fly that had borne him from Llwynan, but the Rev. Isaac Dixie. That sleek and rosy gentleman, with flat feet, and large hands, and fascinating smile, was well pleased to join the party, and march blandly beside the chair of the viscountess, invigorating the fainting spirit of that great lady by the balm of his sympathy and the sunshine of his smile.

So into the castle they went, across the nearly obliterated moat, where once a draw-bridge hung, now mantled with greenest grass, under the grim arches, where once the clanging portcullis rose and fell, and into the base court, and so under other arches into the inner court, surrounded by old ivy-mantled walls.

In this seclusion the old Lady Calthorpe stopped her chair to enjoy the sweet air and sunshine, and the agreeable conversation of the divine, and Cleve offered to guide Miss Caroline Oldys through the ruins, an exploration in which she seemed highly interested.

Cleve spoke low and eloquently, but I don't think it was about the architecture. Time passed rapidly, and at last Miss Oldys whispered—

"We've been too long away from Lady Calthorpe. I must go back. She'll think I have deserted her."

So they emerged from the roofless chambers and dim corridors, and Cleve wished from the bottom of his heart that some good or evil angel would put off his uncle's nuptials for another week, and all would be well—*well!*

Yes—what was "well," if one goes to moral ideals for a standard? We must run risks—we must set one side of the book against the other. What is the purpose and the justification of all morality but happiness? The course which involves least misery is alternatively the moral course. And take the best act that ever you did, and place it in that dreadful solvent, the light of God's eye, and how much of its motive will stand the test? Yes—another week, and all will be well; and has not a fertile mind like his, resource for any future complication, as for this, that may arise?

Captain Shrapnell was not sorry to meet this distinguished party as they emerged, and drew up on the grass at the side, and raised his hat with a reverential smile, as the old lady wheeled by, and throwing a deferential concern suddenly into his countenance, he walked a few paces beside Cleve, while he said—

"You've heard, of course, about your uncle, Lord Verney?"

"No?" answered Cleve, on chance.

"*No?*—Oh?—Why it's half an hour ago. I hope it's nothing serious; but his groom drove down from Malory for the doctor here. Something wrong with his head—suddenly, I understand, and Old Lyster took his box with him, and a bottle of leeches—that looks serious, eh?—along with him."

Shrapnell spoke low, and shook his head.

"I—I did not hear a word of it. I've been in the castle with old Lady Calthorpe. I'm very much surprised."

There was something odd, shrewd old Shrapnell fancied, in the expression of Cleve's eyes which for a moment met his. But Cleve looked pale and excited, as he said a word in a very low tone to Miss Oldys, and walked across the street accompanied by Shrapnell, to the doctor's shop.

"Oh!" said Cleve, hastily stepping in, and accosting a lean, pale youth, with lank, black hair, who paused in the process of bruising a prescription in a mortar as he approached. "My uncle's not well, I hear—Lord Verney—at Malory?"

The young man glanced at Captain Shrapnell.

"The doctor told me not to mention, sir—but if *you'd* come into the back-room—"

"I'll be with you in a moment," said Cleve Verney to Shrapnell, at the same time stepping into the sanctum, and the glass-door being shut, he asked, "What *is* it?"

"The doctor thought it must be apoplexy, sir," murmured the young man, gazing with wide open eyes, very solemnly, in Cleve's face.

"So I fancied," and Cleve paused, a little stunned; "and the doctor's there, at Malory, *now?*"

"Yes, sir; he'll be there a quarter of an hour or more by this time," answered the young man.

Again Cleve paused.

"It was not *fatal*—he was still living?" he asked very low.

"Yes, sir—sure."

Cleve, forgetting any form of valediction, passed into the shop.

"I must drive down to Malory," he said; and calling one of those pony carriages which ply in Cardyllian, he drove away, with a wave of his hand to the captain, who was sorely puzzled to read the true meaning of that handsome mysterious face.

CHAPTER LXIV.

A NEW LIGHT.

It was all over Cardyllian by this time that the viscount was very ill—dying perhaps—possibly dead. Under the transparent green shadow of the tall old trees, down the narrow road to

[alory, which he had so often passed in other ıoods, more passionate, hardly perhaps less selfh, than his present, was Cleve now driving ith brain and heart troubled and busy—"walkıg, as before, in a vain shadow, and disquieting imself in vain." The daisies looked up innoently as the eyes of children, into his darkened azo. Had fate after all taken pity on him, nd was here by one clip of the inexorable ıears a deliverance from the hell of his comlication?

As Cleve entered the gate of Malory he saw he party from Cardyllian leaving in the yacht n their return. Lady Wimbledon, it turned ut, had remained behind in charge of Lord Verney. On reaching the house, Cleve learned hat Lord Verney was *alive*—was better in fact.

Combining Lady Wimbledon's and the doc-or's narratives, what Cleve learned amounted o this: Lord Verney, who affected a mysteriıus urgency and haste in his correspondence, ıad given orders that his letters should follow ıim to Malory that day. One of these letters, with a black seal and black-bordered envelope, proved to be a communication of considerable interest. It was addressed to him by the clergyman who had charge of poor old Lady Verney's conscience, and announced that his care was ended, and the Dowager Lady, Lord Verney's mother, was dead.

As the doctor who had attended her was gone, and no one but servants in the house, he had felt it a duty to write to Lord Verney to apprise him of the melancholy event.

The melancholy event was no great shock to Lord Verney, her mature son of sixty-four, who had sometimes wondered dimly whether she would live as long as the old Countess of Desmond, and go on drawing her jointure for fifty years after his own demise. He had been a good son; he had nothing to reproach himself with. She was about ninety years of age; the estate was relieved of £1500 per annum. She had been a religious woman too, and was, no doubt, happy. On the whole the affliction was quite supportable.

But no affliction ever came at a more awkward time. Here was his marriage on the eve of accomplishment—a secret so well kept up to yesterday that no one on earth, he fancied, but half a dozen people, knew that any such thing was dreamed of. Lord Verney, like other tragedians in this theatre of ours, was, perhaps, a little more nervous than he seemed, and did not like laughter in the wrong place. He did not want to be talked over, or, as he said, "any jokes or things about it." And therefore he wished the event to take mankind unawares, as the Flood did. But this morning, with a nice calculation as to time, he had posted four letters, bound, like Antonio's argosies, to different remote parts of the world—one to Pau, another to Lisbon, a third to Florence, and a fourth for Geneva, to friends who were likely to spread the news in all directions—which he cared nothing about, if only the event came off at the appointed time. With the genius of a diplomatist, he had planned his remaining dispatches, not very many, so as to reach their less distant destinations at the latest hour, previous to that of his union. But the others were actually on their way, and he supposed a month or more must now pass before it could take place with any decorum, and, in the mean time, all the world would be enjoying their laugh over his interesting situation.

Lord Verney was very much moved when he read this sad letter; he was pathetic and peevish, much moved and irritated, and shed some tears. He withdrew to write a note to the clergyman, who had announced the catastrophe, and was followed by Lady Wimbledon, who held herself privileged, and to her he poured forth his "ideas and feelings" about his "poor dear mother who was gone, about it;" and suddenly he was seized with a giddiness so violent that if a chair had not been behind him he must have fallen on the ground.

It was something like a fit; Lady Wimbledon was terrified; he looked so ghastly, and answered nothing, only sighed laboriously, and moved his white lips. In her distraction she threw up the window, and screamed for the servants; and away went Lord Verney's open carriage, as we have seen, to Cardyllian, for the doctor.

By the time that Cleve arrived, the attack had declared itself gout—fixed, by a mustard bath, "nicely" in the foot, leaving, however, its "leven mark" upon the head where it had flickered, in an angrily inflamed eye.

Here was another vexation. It might be over in a week, the doctor said; it might last a month. But for the present it was quite out of the question moving him. They must contrive, and make him as comfortable as they could. But at Malory he must be contented to remain for the present.

He saw Cleve for a few minutes.

"It's very unfortunate—your poor dear grandmother—and this gout; but we must bow to the will of Providence; we have every consolation in her case. She's no doubt gone to heaven, about it; but it's indescribably untoward the whole thing; you apprehend me—the marriage—you know—and things; we must pray to heaven to grant us patience under these cross-grained, unintelligible misfortunes that are always persecuting some people, and never come in the way of others, and I beg you'll represent to poor Caroline how it is. I'm not even to write for a day or two; and you must talk to her, Cleve, and try to keep her up, for I do believe she does like her old man, and does not wish to see the poor old fellow worse than he is; and, Cleve, I appreciate your attention and affection in coming so promptly;" and Lord Verney put out his thin hand and pressed Cleve's. "You're very kind, Cleve, and if they allow me I'll see you to-morrow, and you'll tell me what's in the papers, for they won't let me read; and there will be this funeral, you know—about it—your

poor dear grandmother; she'll of course—she'll be buried; you'll have to see to that, you know; and Larkin, you know—he'll save you trouble, and—and—hey! ha, ha—hoo! Very pleasant! Good gracious, what torture! Ha!—oh, dear! Well, I think I've made every thing pretty clear, and you'll tell Caroline—it's only a flying gout—about it—and—and things. So I must bid you good-bye, dear Cleve, and God bless you."

So Cleve did see Caroline Oldys at the Verney Arms, and talked a great deal with her, in a low tone, while old Lady Wimbledon dozed in her chair, and, no doubt, it was all about his uncle's "flying gout."

That night our friend Wynne Williams was sitting in his snuggery, a little bit of fire was in the grate, the air being sharp, his tea-things on the table, and the cozy fellow actually reading a novel, with his slippered feet on the fender.

It was half past nine o'clock, a rather rakish hour in Cardyllian, when the absorbed attorney was aroused by a tap at his door.

I think I have already mentioned that in that town of the golden age, hall-doors stand open, in evidence of "ancient faith that knows no guile," long after dark.

"Come in," said Wynne Williams; and to his amazement who should enter, not with the conventional smile of greeting, but pale, dark, and wo-begone, but the tall figure of Mrs. Rebecca Mervyn.

Honest Wynne Williams never troubled himself about ghosts, but he had read of spectral illusions, and old Mrs. Mervyn unconsciously encouraged a fancy that the thing he greatly feared had come upon him, and that he was about to become a victim to that sort of hallucination. She stood just a step within the door, looking at him, and he, with his novel, on his knee, stared at her as fixedly.

"She's dead," said the old lady.

"*Who?*" exclaimed the attorney.

"The Dowager Lady Verney," she continued, rather than answered.

"I was so much astonished, ma'am, to see you here; you haven't been down in the town these twelve years, I think. I could scarce believe my eyes. Won't you come in, ma'am? Pray do." The attorney by this time was on his legs, and doing the honors, much relieved, and he placed a chair for her. "If it's any business, ma'am, I'll be most happy, or any time you like."

"Yes, she's dead," said she again.

"Oh, come in, ma'am—*do*—so is Queen Anne," said the attorney, laughing kindly. "I heard *that* early to-day; we *all* heard it, and we're sorry, of course. Sit down, ma'am. But then she was not very far from a hundred, and we're all mortal. Can I do any thing for you, ma'am?"

"She was good to me—a proud woman—hard, they used to say; but she was good to me—yes, sir—and so she's gone, at last. She was frightened at them—there was something in them—my poor head—you know—*I* couldn't see it, and I did not care—for the little child was gone; it was only two months old, and she was ninety years; it's a long time, and now she's in her shroud, poor thing! and I may speak to you."

"Do, ma'am—pray; but it's growing late and hadn't we better come to the point a bit?"

She was sitting in the chair he had placed for her, and she had something under her cloak, a thick book it might be, which she held close in her arms. She placed it on the table, and it turned out to be a small tin box with a padlock.

"Papers, ma'am?" he inquired.

"Will you read them, sir, and see what ought to be done—there's the key?"

"Certainly, ma'am;" and having unlocked it, he disclosed two little sheaves of papers neatly folded and endorsed.

The attorney turned these over rapidly, merely reading at first the little note of its contents written upon each. "By Jove!" he exclaimed; he looked very serious now, with a frown and the corners of his mouth drawn down, like a man who witnesses something horrible.

"And, ma'am, how long have you had these?"

"Since Mr. Sedley died."

"I know; that's more than twenty years, I think; did you show them to any one?"

"Only to the poor old lady who's gone."

"Ay, I see."

There was a paper endorsed "Statement of Facts," and this the attorney was now reading.

"Now, ma'am, do you wish to place these papers in my hands, that I may act upon them as the interests of those who are nearest to you may require?"

She looked at him with a perplexed gaze, and said, "*Yes*, sir, certainly."

"Very well, ma'am; then I must go up to town at once. It's a very serious affair, ma'am, and I'll do my duty by you."

"Can you understand them, sir?"

"N—*no*—that is, I must see counsel in London; I'll be back again in a day or two. Leave it all to me, ma'am, and the moment I know any thing for certain, you shall know all about it."

The old woman asked the question as one speaks in their sleep, without hearing the answer. Her finger was to her lip, and she was looking down with a knitted brow.

"Ay, she was proud—I *promised*—proud—she was—very high—it will be in Penruthyn, she told me she would be buried there—Dowager Lady Verney! I wish, sir, it had been I."

She drew her cloak about her and left the room, and he accompanied her with the candle to the hall-door, and saw her hurry up the street.

Now and then a passenger looked at the tall cloaked figure gliding swiftly by, but no one recognized her.

The attorney was gaping after her in deep abstraction, and when she was out of sight he repeated, with a resolute wag of his head—

"I *will* do my duty by you—and a serious affair, upon *my soul!* A *very* serious affair it is."

And so he closed the door, and returned to his sitting-room in deep thought, and very strange excitement, and continued reading those papers till one o'clock in the morning.

CHAPTER LXV.

MR. DINGWELL AND MRS. MERVYN CONVERSE.

CLEVE was assiduous in consoling Miss Caroline Oldys, a duty specially imposed upon him by the voluntary absence of Lady Wimbledon, who spent four or five hours every day at Malory, with an equally charitable consideration for the spirits of Lord Verney, who sat complaining in pain and darkness.

Every day he saw more or less of the Rev. Isaac Dixie, but never alluded to his midnight interview with him at Clay Rectory. Only once, a little abruptly, he had said to him, as they walked together on the green—

"I say, you must manage your duty for two Sundays more—you *must* stay here for the funeral—that will be on Tuesday week."

Cleve said no more; but he looked at him with a fixed meaning in his eye, with which the clergyman somehow could not parley.

At the post-office, to which Miss Oldys had begged his escort, a letter awaited him. His address was traced in the delicate and peculiar hand of that beautiful being who in those very scenes had once filled every hour of his life with dreams, and doubts, and hopes; and now how did he feel as those slender characters met his eye? Shall I say, as the murderer feels when some relic of his buried crime is accidentally turned up before his eyes—chilled with a pain that reaches on to doomsday—with a tremor of madness—with an insufferable disgust?

Smiling, he put it with his other letters in his pocket, and felt as if every eye looked on him with suspicion—with dislike; and as if little voices in the air were whispering, "It is from his wife—from his wife—from his wife."

Tom Sedley was almost by his side, and had just got his letters—filling him, too, with dismay—posted not ten minutes before from Malory, and smiting his last hope to the centre.

"Look at it, Cleve," he said, half an hour later. "I thought all these things might have softened him—his own illness and his mother's death; and the Etherages—by Jove, I think he'll ruin them; the poor old man is going to leave Hazelden in two or three weeks, and—he's *utterly* ruined I think, and all by that d—d lawsuit, that Larkin knows perfectly well Lord Verney can never succeed in; but in the mean time it will be the ruin of that nice family, that were so happy there; and look—here it is—my own letter returned—so insulting—like a beggar's petition; and this note—not even signed by him."

"Lord Verney is indisposed; he has already expressed his fixed opinion upon the subject referred to in Mr. Sedley's statement, which he returns; he declines discussing it, and refers Mr. Sedley again to his solicitor."

So, disconsolate Sedley, having opened his griefs to Cleve, went on to Hazelden, where he was only too sure to meet with a thoroughly sympathetic audience.

A week passed, and more. And now came the day of old Lady Verney's funeral. It was a long procession—tenants on horseback, tenants on foot—the carriages of all the gentlemen round about.

On its way to Penruthyn Priory the procession passed by the road, ascending the steep by the little church of Llanderris, and full in view, through a vista in the trees, of the upper windows of the steward's house.

Our friend Mr. Dingwell, whose journey had cost him a cold, got his clothes on for this occasion, and was in the window, with a field-glass, which had amused him on the road from London.

He had called up Mrs. Mervyn's servant-girl to help him to the names of such people as she might recognize.

As the hearse, with its grove of sable plumes, passed up the steep road, he was grave for a few minutes; and he said—

"That was a good woman. Well for *you*, ma'am, if you have ever one-twentieth part of her virtues. She did not know how to make her virtues pleasant, though; she liked to have people afraid of her; and if you have people afraid of you, my dear, the odds are they'll hate you. We can't have every thing—virtue and softness, fear and love—in this queer world. An excellent—severe—most lady-like woman. What are they stopping for now? Oh! There they go again. The only ungenteel thing she ever did is what she has begun to do now—to rot; but she'll do it *alone*, in the *dark*, you see; and there *is* a right and a wrong, and she did some good in her day."

The end of his queer homily he spoke in a tone a little gloomy, and he followed the hearse awhile with his glass.

In two or three minutes more the girl thought she heard him sob; and looking up, with a shock, perceived that his face was gleaming with a sinister laugh.

"What a precious coxcomb that fellow Cleve is—chief mourner, egad—and he does it pretty well. 'My inky cloak, good mother.' He looks so sorry, I almost believe he's thinking of his uncle's wedding. 'Thrift, Horatio, thrift!' I say, miss—I always forget your name. My dear young lady, be so good, will you, as to say I feel better to-day, and should be very happy to see Mrs. Mervyn, if she could give me ten minutes?"

So she ran down upon her errand, and he drew back from the window, suffering the curtain to fall back as before, darkening the room; and Mr. Dingwell sat himself down, with his back to the little light that entered, drawing his *robe-de-chambre* about him and resting his chin on his hand.

"Come in, ma'am," said Mr. Dingwell, in answer to a tap at the door, and Mrs. Mervyn entered. She looked in the direction of the speaker, but could see only a shadowy outline, the room was so dark.

"Pray, madam, sit down on the chair I've set for you by the table. I'm at last well enough to see you. You'll have questions to put to me. I'll be happy to tell you all I know. I was with poor Arthur Verney, as you are aware, when he died."

"I have but one hope now, sir—to see him hereafter Oh, sir! *did* he think of his unhappy soul—of heaven?"

"Of the other place he did think, ma'am. I've heard him wish evil people, such as clumsy servants and his brother here, in it; but I suppose you mean to ask was he devout—eh?"

"Yes, sir; it has been my prayer, day and night, in my long solitude. What prayers, what prayers, what terrible prayers, God only knows."

"Your prayers were heard, ma'am; he was a saint.

"Thank God!"

"The most punctual, edifying, self-tormenting saint I ever had the pleasure of knowing in any quarter of the globe," said Mr. Dingwell.

"*Oh!* thank God."

"His reputation for sanctity in Constantinople was immense, and at both sides of the Bosphorus he was the admiration of the old women and the wonder of the little boys, and an excellent Dervish, a friend of his, who was obliged to leave after having been bastinadoed for a petty larceny, told me he has seen even the town dogs and the asses hold down their heads, upon my life, as he passed by, to receive his blessing!"

"Superstition—but still it shows, sir—"

"To be sure it does, ma'am."

"It shows that his sufferings—my darling Arthur—had made a real change."

"Oh! a *complete* change, ma'am. Egad, a *very* complete change, *indeed!*"

"When he left this, sir, he was—oh! my darling! thoughtless, volatile—"

"An infidel and a scamp—eh? So he told me, ma'am."

"And I have prayed that his sufferings might be sanctified to him," she continued, "and that he might be converted, even though I should never see him more."

"So he was, ma'am; *I* can vouch for that," said Mr. Dingwell.

Again poor Mrs. Mervyn broke into a rapture of thanksgiving.

"Vastly lucky you've been, ma'am; *all* your prayers about him, egad, seem to have been granted. Pity you did not pray for something he might have enjoyed more. But all's for the best—eh?"

"All things work together for good—all for good," said the old lady, looking upward, with her hands clasped.

"And you're as happy at his *conversion*, ma'am, as the Ulema who received him into the faith of Mahomet—*happier*, I really think. Lucky dog! what interest he inspires, what joy he diffuses, even now, in Mahomet's paradise, I dare say. It's worth while being a sinner for the sake of the conversion, ma'am."

"Sir—sir, I can't understand," gasped the old lady, after a pause.

"No difficulty, ma'am, none in the world."

"For God's sake, *don't;* I think I'm going *mad*," cried the poor woman.

"Mad, my good lady! Not a bit. What's the matter? Is it Mahomet? You're not afraid of *him?*"

"Oh, sir, for the *Lord's* sake tell me what you mean?" implored she, wildly.

"I mean *that*, to be sure; what I *say*," he replied. "I mean that the gentleman complied with the custom of the country—don't you see?—and submitted to Kismet. It was his fate, ma'am; it's the invariable condition; and they'd have handed him over to his Christian compatriots to murder, according to Frank law, otherwise. So, ma'am, he shaved his head, put on a turban—they wore turbans then—and, with his Koran under his arm, walked into a mosque, and said his say about Allah and the rest, and has been safe ever since."

"Oh, oh, oh!" cried the poor old lady, trembling in a great agony.

"Ho! *no*, ma'am; 'twasn't much," said he, briskly.

"All, all; the last hope!" cried she, wildly.

"Don't run away with it, pray. It's a very easy and gentleman-like faith, Mahometanism—except in the matter of wine; and even that you can have, under the rose, like other things here, ma'am, that aren't quite orthodox; eh?" said Mr. Dingwell.

"Oh, Arthur, Arthur!" moaned the poor lady distractedly, wringing her hands.

"Suppose, ma'am, we pray it may turn out to have been the right way. Very desirable since Arthur died in it," said Mr. Dingwell.

"Oh, sir, oh! I couldn't have believed it. Oh, sir, this shock—this frightful shock!"

"Courage, madam! Console yourself. Let us hope he didn't believe this any more than the other," said Mr. Dingwell.

Mrs. Mervyn leaned her cheek on her thin clasped hands, and was rocking herself to and fro in her misery.

"I was with him, you know, in his last moments," said Mr. Dingwell, shrugging sympathetically, and crossing his leg. "It's always interesting, those last moments—eh?—and exquisitely affecting, even—*particularly* if it isn't very clear *where* the fellow's going."

A tremulous moan escaped the old lady.

"And he called for some wine. That's comforting, and has a flavor of Christianity, eh? A *relapse*, don't you think, very nearly?—as so unconvivial a moment. It must have been *principle;* eh? Let us hope."

The old lady's moans and sighs were her answers.

"And now that I think on it, he must have died a Christian," said Mr. Dingwell, briskly.

The old lady looked up, and listened breathlessly.

"Because, after we thought he was speechless, there was one of those what-d'ye-call-'ems—begging dervish fellows—came into the room, and kept saying one of their long yarns about the prophet Mahomet, and my dying friend made me a sign; so I put my ear to his lips, and he said distinctly, 'He be d—d!'—I beg your pardon; but last words are always precious."

Here came a pause.

Mr. Dingwell was quite bewildering this trembling old lady.

"And the day before," resumed Mr. Dingwell, "poor Arthur said, 'They'll bury me here under a turban; but I should like a mural tablet in old Penruthyn church. They'd be ashamed of my name, I think; so they can put on it the date of my decease, and the simple inscription, "Check-mate."' But whether he meant to himself or his creditors I'm not able to say."

Mrs. Mervyn groaned.

"It's very interesting. And he had a message for you, ma'am. He called you by a name of endearment. He made me stoop, lest I should miss a word, and he said, 'Tell my little linnet,' said he—"

But here Mr. Dingwell was interrupted. A wild cry, a wild laugh, and—"Oh, Arthur, it's *you!*"

He felt, as he would have said, "oddly" for a moment—a sudden flood of remembrance, of youth. The worn form of that old outcast, who had not felt the touch of human kindness for nearly thirty years, was clasped in the strain of an inextinguishable and angelic love—in the thin arms of one likewise faded and old, and near the long sleep in which the heart is fluttered and pained no more.

There was a pause, a faint laugh, a kind of sigh, and he said—

"So you've found me out."

"Darling, darling! you're not changed?"

"Change!" he answered, in a low tone. "There's a change, little linnet, from summer to winter; where the flowers were the snow is. Draw the curtain, and let us look on one another."

CHAPTER LXVI.

THE GREEK MERCHANT SEES LORD VERNEY.

Our friend, Wynne Williams, made a much longer stay than he had expected in London. From him, too, Tom Sedley received about this time a mysterious summons to town, so urgent and so solemn that he felt there was something extraordinary in it; and on consultation with the Etherage girls, those competent advisers settled that he should at once obey it.

Tom wrote to Agnes on the evening of his arrival—

"I have been for an hour with Wynne Williams; you have no notion what a good fellow he is, and what a wonderfully clever fellow. There is something *very* good in prospect for me, but not yet certain, and I am bound not to tell a human being. But *you*, I will, of course, the moment I know it for certain. It may turn out nothing at all; but we are working very hard all the same."

In the mean time, down at Malory, things were taking a course of which the good people of Cardyllian had not a suspicion.

With a little flush over his grim, brown face, with a little jaunty swagger, and a slight screwing of his lips, altogether as if he had sipped a little too much brandy and water—though he had nothing of the kind that day—giggling and chuckling over short sentences; with a very determined knitting of his eyebrows, and something in his eyes unusually sinister, which a sense of danger gives to a wicked face, Mr. Dingwell walked down the clumsy stairs of the steward's house, and stood within the hatch.

There he meditated for a few moments, with compressed lips, and a wandering sweep of his eyes along the stone urns and rose-bushes that stood in front of the dwarf wall, which is backed by the solemn old trees of Malory.

"In for a penny, in for a pound."

And he muttered a Turkish sentence, I suppose equivalent; and thus fortified by the wisdom of nations, he stepped out upon the broad gravel walk, looked about him for a second or two, as if recalling recollections, in a sardonic mood, and then walked round the corner to the front of the house, and up the steps, and pulled at the door bell; the knocker had been removed in tenderness to Lord Verney's irritable nerves.

Two of his tall footmen in powder and livery were there, conveyed into this exile from Ware; for calls of inquiry were made here, and a glimpse of state was needed to overawe the bumpkins.

"His lordship was better; was sitting in the drawing-room; might possibly see the gentleman; and who should he say, please?"

"Say Mr. Dingwell, the great Greek merchant, who has a most important communication to make."

His lordship would see Mr. Dingwell. Mr. Dingwell's name was called to a second footman, who opened a door, and announced him.

Lady Wimbledon, who had been sitting at the window reading aloud to Lord Verney at a little chink of light, abandoned her pamphlet, and rustled out by another door, as the Greek merchant entered.

Dim at best, and very unequal was the light. The gout had touched his lordship's right eyeball, which was still a little inflamed, and the doctor insisted on darkness.

There was something diabolically waggish in Mr. Dingwell's face, if the noble lord could only

have seen it distinctly, as he entered the room. He was full of fun; he was enjoying a coming joke, with perhaps a little spice of danger in it, and could hardly repress a giggle.

The viscount requested Mr. Dingwell to take a chair, and that gentleman waited till the servant had closed the door, and then thanked Lord Verney in a strange nasal tone, quite unlike Mr. Dingwell's usual voice.

"I come here, Lord Verney, with an important communication to make. I could have made it to some of the people about you—and you have able professional people—or to your nephew; but it is a pleasure, Lord Verney, to speak instead to the cleverest man in England."

The noble lord bowed a little affably, although he might have questioned Mr. Dingwell's right to pay him compliments in his own house; but Mr. Dingwell's fiddlestick had touched the right string, and the noble instrument made music accordingly. Mr. Dingwell, in the dark, looked very much amused.

"I can hardly style myself *that*, Mr. Dingwell."

"I speak of *business*, Lord Verney; and I adopt the language of the world in saying the cleverest man in England."

"I'm happy to say my physician allows me to listen to reading, and to talk a little, and there can be no objection to a little business either," said Lord Verney, passing by the compliment this time, but, on the whole, good-humoredly disposed toward Mr. Dingwell.

"I've two or three things to mention, Lord Verney; and the first is money."

Lord Verney coughed dryly. He was suddenly recalled to a consciousness of Mr. Dingwell's character.

"Money, my lord. The name makes you cough, as smoke does a man with the asthma. I've found it all my life as hard to keep, as you do to part with. If I had but possessed Lord Verney's instincts and abilities, I should have been at this moment one of the wealthiest men in England."

Mr. Dingwell rose as he said this, and bowed toward Lord Verney.

"I said I should name it first; but as your lordship coughs, we had, perhaps, best discuss it last. Or, indeed, if it makes your lordship cough very much, perhaps we had better postpone it, or leave it entirely to your lordship's discretion—as I wouldn't for the world send this little attack into your chest."

Lord Verney thought Mr. Dingwell less unreasonable, but also more flighty, than he had supposed.

You are quite at liberty, sir, to treat your subjects in what order you please. I wish you to understand that I have no objection to hear you; and—and you may proceed."

"The next is a question on which I presume we shall find ourselves in perfect accord. I had the honor, as you are very well aware, of an intimate acquaintance with your late brother, the Honorable Arthur Verney, and beyond measure I admired his talents, which were second in brilliancy only to your own. I admired even his *principles*—but I see they make you cough also. They were, it is true, mephitic, sulphurous, such as might well take your breath, or that of any other moral man, quite away; but they had what I call the Verney stamp upon them; they were perfectly consistent, and quite harmonious. His, my lord, was the intense and unflinching rascality, if you permit me the phrase, of a man of genius, and I honored it. Now, my lord, his adventures were curious, as you are aware, and I have them at my fingers' ends—his crimes, his escape, and, above all, his life at Constantinople—ha, ha, ha! It would make your hair stand on end. And to think he should have been *your brother!* Upon my *soul!* Though, as I said, the genius—the *genius*, Lord Verney—the inspiration was there. In *that* he *was* your brother."

"I'm aware, sir, that he had talent, Mr. Dingwell, and could speak—about it. At Oxford he was considered the most promising young man of his time—almost."

"Yes, except *you;* but you were two years later."

"Yes, exactly. I was precisely two years later about it."

"Yes, my lord, you were always about *it;* so he told me. No matter what it was—a book, or a boot-jack, or a bottle of port, you were always about it. It was a way you had, he said—about it."

"I wasn't aware that any one remarked any such thing—about it," said Lord Verney, very loftily.

It dawned dimly upon him that Mr. Dingwell, who was a very irregular person, was possibly intoxicated. But Mr. Dingwell was speaking, though in a very nasal, odd voice, yet with a clear and sharp articulation, and in a cool way, not the least like a man in that sort of incapacity. Lord Verney concluded, therefore, that Mr. Dingwell was either a remarkably impertinent person, or most insupportably *deficient* in the commonest tact. I think he would have risen, even at the inconvenience of suddenly disturbing his flanneled foot, and intimated that he did not feel quite well enough to continue the conversation, had he not known something of Mr. Dingwell's dangerous temper, and equally dangerous knowledge and opportunities; for had they not subsidized Mr. Dingwell, in the most unguarded manner, and on the most monstrous scale, pending the investigation and proof before the Lords? "It was inevitable," Mr. Larkin said, "but also a little awkward; although *they* knew that the man had sworn nothing but the truth." "*Very* awkward, *Lord Verney* thought, and therefore he endured Mr. Dingwell.

But the "great Greek merchant," as, I suppose half jocularly, he termed himself, not only seemed odious at this moment, by reason of his impertinence, but also formidable to Lord Verney, who, having waked from his dream that

Dingwell would fly beyond the Golden Horn when once his evidence was given, and the cornet well fixed on the brows of the Hon. Kiffyn Fulke Verney, found himself still haunted by his vampire bat, which hung by its hooked wing, sometimes in the shadows of Rosemary Court—sometimes in those of the old steward's house, —sometimes hovering noiselessly nearer—always with its eyes upon him, threatening to fasten on his breast, and drain him.

The question of money he would leave "to his discretion." But what did his impertinence mean? Was it not minatory? And to what exorbitant sums in a choice of evils might not "discretion" point?

"This d—d Mr. Dingwell," thought Lord Verney, "will play the devil with my gout. I wish he was at the bottom of the Bosphorus."

"Yes. And your brother, Arthur—there were points in which he differed from you. Unless I'm misinformed, he was a first-rate cricketer, the crack bat of their team, and you were *nothing;* he was one of the best Grecians in the university, and you were plucked."

"I—I don't exactly see the drift of your rather inaccurate and extremely offensive observations, Mr. Dingwell," said Lord Verney, wincing and flushing in the dark.

"Offensive? Good heaven! But I'm talking to a Verney, to a man of genius; and I say, how the devil could I tell that *truth* could offend, either? With this reflection I forgive *myself*, and I go on to say what will interest you."

Lord Verney, who had recovered his presence of mind, here nodded, to intimate that he was ready to hear him.

"Well, there were a few other points, but I need not mention them, in which you differed. You were both alike in this—each was a genius—you were an opaque and obscure genius, he a brilliant one; but each being a genius, there must have been a sympathy, notwithstanding his being a publican and you a—not exactly a Pharisee, but a paragon of prudence."

"I really, Mr. Dingwell, must request—you see I'm far from well, about it—that you'll be so good as a little to abridge your remarks; and I don't want to hear—you can easily, I hope, understand—my poor brother talked of in any but such terms as a brother should listen to."

"That arises, Lord Verney, from your not having had the advantage of his society for so very many years. Now, I knew him intimately, and I can undertake to say he did not care twopence what any one on earth thought of him, and it rather amused him painting infernal caricatures of himself, as a fiend or a monkey, and he often made me laugh by the hour—ha, ha, ha! he amused himself with revealed religion, and with every thing sacred, sometimes even with *you*—ha, ha, ha—he *had* certainly a wonderful sense of the ridiculous."

"May I repeat my request, if it does not appear to you *very* unreasonable?" again interrupted Lord Verney, "and may I entreat to know what it is you wish me to understand about it, in as few words as you can, sir?"

"Certainly, Lord Verney; it is just this. As I have got materials, perfectly authentic, from my deceased friend, both about himself—horribly racy, you may suppose—ha, ha, ha—about your grand-uncle Pendel—you've heard of him, of course—about your aunt Deborah, poor thing, who sold mutton pies in Chester—I was thinking—suppose I write a memoir—Arthur alone deserves it; you pay the expenses; I take the profits, and I throw you in the copyright for a few thousand more, and call it 'Snuffed out lights of the Peerage,' or something of the kind? I think something is due to Arthur, don't you?"

"I think you can hardly be serious, Mr.—Mr.—"

"Perfectly serious, upon my soul, my lord. Could any thing be more curious? Eccentricity's the soul of genius, and you're proud of your genius, I *hope*."

"What strikes me, Mr. Dingwell, amounts, in short, to something like this. My poor brother, he has been unfortunate, about it, and—and *worse*, and he has done things, and I ask myself *why* there should be an effort to obtrude him, and I answer myself, there's no reason, about it, and therefore I vote to have every thing as it is, and I shall neither contribute my countenance, about it, nor money to any such undertaking, or—or—undertaking."

"Then my book comes to the ground, egad."

Lord Verney simply raised his head with a little sniff, as if he were smelling at a snuff-box.

"Well, Arthur must have something, you know."

"My brother, the Honorable Arthur Kiffyn Verney, is past receiving any thing at my hands, and I don't think he probably looked for any thing, about it, at any time from *yours*."

"Well, but it's just the time for what I'm thinking of. You wouldn't give him a tombstone in his life-time, I suppose, though you *are* a genius. Now, I happen to know he wished a tombstone. *You'd* like a tombstone, though not now—time enough in a year or two, when you're fermenting in your lead case."

"I'm not thinking of tombstones at present, sir, and it appears to me that you are giving yourself a very unusual latitude—about it."

"I don't mean in the mausoleum at Ware. Of course that's a place where people who have led a decorous life putrify together. I meant at the small church of Penruthyn, where the scamps await judgment."

"I—a—don't see that such a step is properly for the consideration of any persons—about it—outside the members of the Verney family, or more properly, of any but the representatives of that family," said Lord Verney, loftily, "and you'll excuse my not admitting, or—or, in fact, admitting any right in any one else.

"He wished it immensely."

"I can't understand why, sir."

"Nor I; but I suppose you all get them—all ticketed—eh? and I'd write the epitaph, only putting in essentials, though, egad! in such a life it would be as long as a newspaper."

"I've already expressed my opinion, and—and things, and I have nothing to add."

"Then the tombstone comes to the ground also?"

"Any thing *more*, sir?"

"But, my lord, he showed an immense consideration for you."

"I don't exactly recollect *how*."

"By *dying*—you've got hold of every thing, don't you see, and you grudge him a tablet in the little church of Penruthyn, by gad! I told your nephew he wished it, and I tell you he wished it; it's not stinginess, it's your mean pride."

"You seem, Mr. Dingwell, to fancy that there's no limit to the impertinence I'll submit to."

"I'm sure there's none almost—you better not ring the bell—you better think twice—he gave me that message, and he also left me a mallet—quite a toy—but a single knock of it would bring Verney House, or Ware, or this place, about your ears."

The man was speaking in quite another voice now, and in the most awful tones Lord Verney had ever heard in his life, and to his alarmed and sickly eyes it seemed as if the dusky figure of his visitor were dilating in the dark like an evoked Genii.

"I—I think about it—it's quite unaccountable—all this." Lord Verney was looking at the stranger as he spoke, and groping with his left hand for the old-fashioned bell-rope which used to hang near him in the library in Verney House, forgetting that there was no bell of any sort within his reach at that moment.

"I'm not going to take poor dear Arthur's mallet out of my pocket, for the least tap of it would make all England ring and *roar*, sir. No, I'll make no noise; you and I, sir, *tête-à-tête*. I'll have no go-between; no Larkin, no Levi, no Cleve; you and I'll settle it alone. Your brother was a great Grecian, they used to call him Οδυσσευσ—Ulysses. Do you remember? I said I was the great Greek merchant? We have made an exchange together. You must pay. What shall I call myself, for Dingwell isn't my name. I'll take a new one—Το μεν πρωτον Ουτιν 'εαυτον επικαλει—επειδανδε διεφευγε και εξω ην βελους Οδυσσυν ονομαζεσθαι εφη. In English—at first he called himself Outis—*Nobody*; but so soon as he had escaped, and was out of the javelin's reach, he said that he was named Odusseus — *Ulysses*, and here he is. This is the return of Ulysses!"

There had been a sudden change in Mr. Dingwell's Yankee intonation. The nasal tones were heard no more. He approached the window, and said, with a laugh, pulling the shutter more open—

"Why, Kiffyn, you fool, don't you know me?"

There was a silence.

"My great God! my great God of heaven!" came from the white lips of Lord Verney.

"Yes; God's over all," said Arthur Verney, with a strange confusion, between a sneer and something more genuine.

There was a long pause.

"Ha, ha, ha! don't make a scene! Not such a muff?" said Dingwell.

Lord Verney was staring at him with a face white and peaked as that of a corpse, and whispering still — "My God! my great God!" so that Dingwell, as I still call him, began to grow uneasy.

"Come; don't you make mountains of molehills. What the devil's all this fuss about! Here, drink a little of this." He poured out some water, and Lord Verney did sip a little and then gulped down a good deal, and then he looked at Arthur again fixedly, and groaned.

"That's right — never mind. I'll not hurt you. Don't fancy I mean to disturb you. I *can't*, you know, if I wished it *ever* so much. I daren't *show*—I *know* it. Don't suppose I want to *bully* you; the idea's *impracticable*. I looked in merely to tell you, in a friendly way, who I am. You must do something handsome for me, you know. Devil's in it if a fellow can't get a share of his own money, and, as I said before, we'll have no go-betweens, no Jews or attorneys. D—n them all—but settle it between ourselves, like brothers. Sip a little more water."

"Arthur, Arthur, I say, *yes*; good God, I feel I shall have a good deal to say; but—my head, and things—I'm a little perplexed still, and I must have a glass of wine, about it, and I can't do it now; no, I can't."

"I don't live far away, you know; and I'll look in to-morrow—we're not in a hurry."

"It was a strange idea, Arthur. Good Lord, have mercy on me!"

"Not a bad one, eh?"

"Very odd, Arthur!—God forgive you."

"Yes, my dear Kiffyn, and you, too."

"The coronet—about it? I'm placed in a dreadful position, but you shan't be compromised, Arthur. Tell them I'm not very well, and some *wine*, I think—a little chill."

"And to-morrow I can look in again, quietly," said the Greek merchant, "or whenever you like, and I shan't disclose our little confidence."

"It's going—every thing, every thing; I shall see it by and by," said Lord Verney, helplessly.

And thus the interview ended, and Mr. Dingwell in the hall gave the proper alarm about Lord Verney.

CHAPTER LXVII.

A BREAK-DOWN.

About an hour after, a message came down from Malory for the doctor.

"How is his lordship?" asked the doctor, eagerly.

"No, it isn't *him*, sure; it is the old *lady* is taken very bad."

"Lady Wimbledon?"

"No, sure. Her ladyship's not there. Old Mrs. Mervyn."

"Oh!" said the doctor, tranquilized. "Old Rebecca Mervyn, is it? And what may be the matter with the poor old lady?"

"Fainting like; one fainting into another, sure; and her breath almost gone. She's very bad—as pale as a sheet."

"Is she talking at all?"

"No, not a word. Sittin' back in her chair, sure."

"Does she know you, or mind what you say to her?"

"Well, *no*. She's a-holdin' that old white-headed man's hand that's been so long bad there, and a-lookin' at him; but I don't think she hears nor sees nothin' myself."

"Apoplexy, or the heart, more likely," ruminated the doctor. "Will you call one of those pony things for me?"

And while the pony carriage was coming to the door, he got a few phials together and his coat on, being in a hurry; for he was to play a rubber of billiards at the club for five shillings at seven o'clock.

In an hour's time after the interview with Arthur Verney, Lord Verney had wonderfully collected his wits. His effects in that department, it is true, were not very much, and perhaps the more easily brought together. He wrote two short letters—marvelously short for him—and sent down to the Verney Arms to request the attendance of Mr. Larkin.

Lord Verney was calm; he was even gentle; spoke in his dry way, little, and in a low tone. He had the window-shutter opened quite, and the curtains drawn back, and seemed to have forgotten his invalided state, and every thing but the revolution which in a moment had overtaken and engulfed him — to which great anguish with a dry resignation he submitted.

Over the chimney was a little oval portrait of his father, the late Lord Verney, taken when they wore the hair long, falling back upon their shoulders. A pretty portrait, refined, handsome, insolent. How dulled it was by time and neglect — how criss-crossed over with little cracks; the evening sun admitted now set it all aglow.

"A very good portrait. How has it been overlooked so long? It must be preserved; it shall go to Verney House. To Verney House? I forgot."

Mr. Jos. Larkin, in obedience to this sudden summons, was speedily with Lord Verney. With this call a misgiving came. The attorney smiled blandly, and talked in his meekest and happiest tones; but people who knew his face would have remarked that sinister contraction of the eye to which in moments of danger or treachery he was subject, and which, in spite of his soft tones and child-like smile, betrayed the fear or the fraud of that vigilant and dangerous Christian.

When he entered the room, and saw Lord Verney's face pale and stern, he had no longer a doubt.

Lord Verney requested Mr. Larkin to sit down, and prepare for something that would surprise him.

He then proceeded to tell Mr. Larkin that the supposed Mr. Dingwell was, in fact, his brother, the Hon. Arthur Verney, and that, therefore, he was not Lord Verney, but only as before, the Hon. Kiffyn Fulke Verney.

Mr. Larkin saw that there was an up-hill game and a heavy task before him. It was certain now, and awful. This conceited and foolish old nobleman, and that devil incarnate, his brother, were to be managed, and those Jew people, who might grow impracticable; and doors were to be muffled, and voices lowered, and a stupendous secret kept. Still he did not despair—if people would only be true to themselves.

When Lord Verney came to that part of his brief narrative where, taking some credit dismally to himself for his penetration, he stated that "notwithstanding that the room was dark and his voice disguised, I recognized him; and you may conceive, Mr. Larkin, that when I made the discovery I was a good deal disturbed about it," Mr. Larkin threw up his eyes and hands—

"*What* a world it is, my dear Lord Verney! for so I persist in styling you still, for this will prove virtually no interruption."

At the close of his sentence the attorney lowered his voice earnestly.

"I don't follow you, sir, about it," replied Lord Verney, disconsolately; "for a man who has had an illness, he looks wonderfully well, and in good spirits and things, and as likely to live as I am, about it."

"My remarks, my lord, were directed rather to what I may term the animus—the design—of this, shall I call it, *demonstration*, my lord, on the part of your lordship's brother."

"Yes, of course, the animus, about it. But it strikes me he's as likely to outlive me as not."

"My lord, may I venture, in confidence and with great respect, to submit, that your lordship was hardly judicious in affording him a personal interview?"

"Why, I should hope my personal direction of that conversation, and—and things, has been such as I should wish," said the peer, very loftily.

"My lord, I have failed to make myself clear. I never questioned the consummate ability with which, no doubt, your lordship's part in that conversation was sustained. What I meant to convey is, that considering the immense distance socially between you, the habitual and undeviating eminence of your lordship's position, and the melancholy circle in which it has been your brother's lot to move, your meeting him face to face for the purpose of a personal discussion of your relations, may lead him to the

absurd conclusion that your lordship is, in fact, afraid of him."

"That, sir, would be a very impertinent conclusion."

"Quite so, my lord, and render him proportionably impracticable. Now, I'll undertake to bring him to reason." The attorney was speaking very low and sternly, with contracted eyes and a darkened face. "He has been married to the lady who lives in the house adjoining, under the name of Mrs. Mervyn, and to my certain knowledge inquiries have been set in motion to ascertain whether there has not been issue of that marriage."

"You may set your mind perfectly at rest with regard to that marriage, Mr. Larkin; the whole thing was thoroughly sifted—and things—my father undertook it, the late Lord Verney, about it; and so it went on, and was quite examined, and it turned out the poor woman had been miserably deceived by a mock ceremony, and this mock thing was the whole *thing*, and there's nothing more; the evidence was very deplorable, and—and quite satisfactory."

"Oh! that's a great weight off my mind," said Larkin, trying to smile, and looking very much disappointed, "a great weight, my lord."

"I knew it would—yes," acquiesced Lord Verney.

"And simplifies our dealings with the other side; for if there had been a good marriage, and concealed issue male of that marriage, they would have used that circumstance to *extort money*."

"Well, I don't see how they could, though; for if there had been a child, about it—he'd have been heir apparent, don't you see? to the title."

"Oh!—a—yes—*certainly*, that's very true, my lord; but then there's *none*, so *that's* at rest."

"I've just heard," interposed Lord Verney, "I may observe, that the poor old lady, Mrs. Mervyn, is suddenly and dangerously ill."

"Oh! *is* she?" said Mr. Larkin very uneasily, for she was, if not his queen, at least a very valuable pawn upon his chess-board.

"Yes; the doctor thinks she's actually dying, poor old soul!"

"What a world! What is life? What is man?" murmured the attorney with a devout feeling of the profoundest vexation. "It was for this most melancholy character," he continued; "you'll pardon me, my lord, for so designating a relative of your lordship's—the Honorable Arthur Verney, who has so *fraudulently*, I will say, presented himself again as a living claimant. Your lordship is aware of course—I shall be going up to town possibly by the mail train to-night—that the law, if it were permitted to act, would remove that obstacle under the old sentence of the court."

"Good God! sir, you can't possibly mean that I should have my brother caught and executed?" exclaimed Lord Verney, turning quite white.

"Quite the reverse, my lord. I'm—I'm unspeakably shocked that I should have so misconveyed myself," said Larkin, his tall bald head tinged to its top with an ingenuous blush. "Oh no, my lord, I understand the Verney feeling too well, thank God, to suppose any thing, I will say, so *entirely* objectionable. I said, my lord, if it were *permitted*, that is, allowed by simple non-interference—your lordship sees—and it is precisely because non-interference must bring about that catastrophe—for I must not conceal from your lordship the fact that there is a great deal of unpleasant talk in the town of Cardyllian already—that I purpose running up to town to-night. There is a Jew firm, your lordship is aware, who have a very heavy judgment against him, and the persons of that persuasion are so interlaced, as I may say, in matters of business, that I should apprehend a communication to them from Goldshed & Levi, who, by the bye, to my certain knowledge—*what* a world it is!—have a person here actually watching Mr. Dingwell, or in other words, the unhappy but Honorable Arthur Verney, in *their* interest." (This was in effect true, but the name of this person, which he did not care to disclose, was Josiah Larkin.) "If I were on the spot, I think I know a way effectually to stop all action of that sort."

"You think they'd arrest him, about it?" said Lord Verney.

"Certainly, my lord."

"It is very much to be deprecated," said Lord Verney.

"And, my lord, if you will agree to place the matter quite in my hands, and peremptorily to decline on all future occasions conceding a personal interview, I'll stake my professional character, I effect a satisfactory compromise."

"I—I don't know—I don't *see* a compromise—there's nothing that I see, to *settle*," said Lord Verney.

"*Every* thing, my lord. Pardon me—your lordship mentioned that, in point of fact, you are no longer Lord Verney; that being so—technically, of course—measures must be taken—in short, a—a quiet *arrangement* with your lordship's brother, to prevent any disturbance, and I undertake to effect it, my lord; the nature of which will be to prevent the return of the title to abeyance, and of the estates to the management of the trustees, whose claim for mesne *rates* and the liquidation of the mortgage, I need not tell your lordship, would be ruinous to you."

"Why, sir—Mr. Larkin—I can hardly believe, sir—you can't mean, or think it possible, sir, that I should lend myself to a deception, and—and sit in the House of Peers by a *fraud*, sir! I'd much rather *die* in the debtor's prison, about it; and I consider myself dishonored by having involuntarily heard such an—an idea."

Poor, pompous, foolish Lord Verney stood up, so dignified and stern in the light of his honest horror, that Mr. Larkin, who despised him utterly, quailed before a phenomenon he could not understand.

Nothing confounded our friend Larkin, as a religious man, so much as discovering, after he

had a little unmasked, that his client would not follow, and left him, as once or twice had happened, alone with his dead villainous suggestion, to account for it how he could.

"Oh dear!—*surely*, my lord, your lordship did not *imagine*," said Mr. Larkin, doing his best, "I was—I, in fact—I *supposed* a *case*. I only went the length of saying that I think—and with *sorrow* I think it—that your lordship's brother has in view an *adjustment* of his claim, and meant to *extract*, I fear, a sum of *money* when he disclosed himself, and conferred with your lordship. I meant, merely, of course, that as he thought this I would *let* him think it, and allow him to disclose his plans, with a view, of course, to deal with that information—first, of *course*, with a view to your lordship's *honor*, and next your lordship's safety; but if your lordship did not see your way *clearly* to it—"

"No, I don't see—I think it most objectionable—about it. I know all that concerns me; and I have written to two official persons—one, I may say, the minister himself—apprising them of the actual position of the title, and asking some information as to how I should proceed in order to divest myself of it and the estates."

"Just what I should have expected from your lordship's exquisite sense of honor," said Mr. Larkin, with a deferential bow, and a countenance black as thunder.

That gigantic machine of torture which he had been building and dovetailing, with patient villainy, at Lord Verney's word fell with a crash, like an enchanted castle at its appointed spell. Well was it for Lord Verney that the instinct of honor was strong in him, and that he would not suffer his vulgar tempter to beguile him into one indefensible concealment. Had he fallen, that tempter would have been his tyrant. He would have held every thing in trust for Mr. Jos. Larkin. The effigy of Lord Verney would, indeed, have stood, on state occasions, robed and coroneted, with his order, driven down to the House, and sat there among hereditary senators; all around him would have been brilliant and luxurious, and the tall bald head of the Christian attorney would have bowed down before the outgoing and the incoming of the phantom. But the real peer would have sat cold and dark enough, in Jos. Larkin's dungeon—his robe on the wall, a shirt of Nessus—his coronet on a nail, a Neapolitan "cap of silence"—quite tame under the rat-like eye of a terror from which he never could escape.

There was a silence here for some time. Lord Verney leaned back with closed eyes, exhausted. Mr. Larkin looked down on the carpet smiling faintly, and with the tip of one finger scratching his bald head gently. The attorney spoke—"Might I suggest, for the safety of your lordship's unhappy brother, that the matter should be kept strictly quiet—just for a day or two, until I shall have made arrangements for his—may I term it—escape."

"Certainly," said Lord Verney, looking away a little. "Yes—*that* must, of course, be arranged; and—and this marriage—I shall leave that decision entirely in the hands of the young lady." Lord Verney was a little agitated. "And I think, Mr. Larkin, I have said every thing at present. Good-evening."

As Mr. Larkin traversed the hall of Malory, scratching the top of his bald head with one finger, in profound and black rumination, I am afraid his thoughts and feelings amounted to a great deal of cursing and swearing.

"Sweet evening," he observed suddenly to the surprised servant who opened the door for him. He was now standing at the threshold, with his hands expanded as if he expected rain, and smiling villainously upward toward the stars.

"Sweet evening," he repeated, and then biting his lip and looking down for a while on the gravel, he descended and walked round the corner to the steward's house.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

MR. LARKIN'S TWO MOVES.

The hatch of the steward's house stood open, and Mr. Larkin entered. There was a girl's voice crying in the room next the hall, and he opened the door.

The little girl was sobbing with her apron to her eyes, and hearing the noise she lowered it and looked at the door, when the lank form of the bald attorney and his sinister face peering in met her eyes, and arrested her lamentation with a new emotion.

"It's only I—Mr. Larkin," said he. He liked announcing himself wherever he went. "I want to know how Mrs. Mervyn is now."

"Gone dead, sir—about a quarter of an hour ago;" and the child's lamentation recommenced.

"Ha! very sad. The doctor here?"

"He's gone, sir."

"And you're *certain* she's dead?"

"Yes, sure, sir," and she sobbed on.

"Stop that," he said, sternly, "just a moment—thanks. I want to see Mr. Dingwell, the old gentleman who has been staying here—where is he?"

"In the drawing-room, sir, please," said the child, a good deal frightened. And to the drawing-room he mounted.

Light was streaming from a door a little open, and a fragrance also of a peculiar tobacco, which he recognized as that of Mr. Dingwell's chibouque. There was a sound of feet upon the floor of the room above, which Mr. Larkin's ear received as those of persons employed in arranging the dead body.

I would be perhaps wronging Mr. Dingwell, as I still call him, to say that he smoked like a man perfectly indifferent. On the contrary, his countenance looked lowering and furious—so much so that Mr. Larkin removed his hat, a courtesy which he had intended studiously to omit.

"Oh! Mr. Dingwell," said he, "I need not introduce myself."

"No, I prefer your withdrawing yourself and shutting the door," said Dingwell.

"Yes, in a moment, sir. I merely wished to mention that Lord Verney—I mean your brother, sir—has fully apprised me of the conversation with which you thought it prudent to favor him."

"You'd rather have been the medium yourself, I fancy. Something to be made of such a situation? Hey! but you *shan't*."

"I don't know what you mean, sir, by something to be made. If I chose to mention your name and abode in the city, sir, you'd not enjoy the power of insulting others long."

"Pooh, sir! I've got *your* letter and my brother's *secret*. I know my strength. I'm steering the fire-ship that will blow you all up, if I please; and you talk of flinging a squib at me, you blockhead! I tell you, sir, you'll make nothing of me; and now you may as well withdraw. There are two things in this house you don't like, though you'll have enough of them one day; there's death up stairs, sir, and something very like the devil here."

Mr. Larkin thought he saw signs of an approaching access of the Dingwell mania, so he made his most dignified bow, and at the door remarked, "I take my leave, sir, and when next we meet I trust I may find you in a very different state of mind, and one more favorable to business."

He had meditated a less covert sneer and menace, but modified his speech prudently as he uttered it; but there was still quite enough that was sinister in his face, as he closed the door, to strike Mr. Dingwell's suspicion.

"Only I've got that fellow in my pocket, I'd say he was bent on mischief; but he's in my pocket; and suppose he did, no great matter, after all—only dying. I'm not gathering up my strength; no—I shall never be the same man again—and life so insipid—and that poor old doll up stairs. So many things going on under the stars, all ending *so!*"

Yes—so many things. There was Cleve, chief mourner to-day, chatting now wonderfully gayly, with a troubled heart, and a kind of growing terror, to that foolish victim who no more suspected him than he did the resurrection of his Uncle Arthur, smoking his chibouque only a mile away.

There, too, far away, is a pale, beautiful young mother, sitting on the bedside of her sleeping boy, weeping silently, as she looks on his happy face, and—*thinks*.

Mr. Dingwell arrayed in traveling costume, suddenly appeared before Lord Verney again.

"I'm not going to plague you—only this. I've an idea I shall lose my life if I don't go to London to-night, and I must catch the mail train. Tell your people to put the horses to your brougham, and drop me at Llwynan."

Lord Verney chose to let his brother judge for himself in this matter, being only too glad to get rid of him.

Shrieking through tunnels, thundering through lonely valleys, gliding over wide, misty plains, spread abroad like lakes, the mail train bore Arthur Verney, and also—each unconscious of the other's vicinity—Mr. Jos. Larkin towards London.

Mr. Larkin had planned a checkmate in two moves. He had been brooding over it in his mufflers, sometimes with his eyes shut, sometimes with his eyes open—all night, in the corner of his carriage. When he stepped out in the morning, with his dispatch-box in his hand, whom should he meet in the cold grey light upon the platform, full front, but Mr. Dingwell. He was awfully startled.

Dingwell had seen him, too; Larkin had felt, as it were, his quick glance touch him, and he was sure that Dingwell had observed his momentary but significant change of countenance. He, therefore, walked up to him, touched him on the arm, and said, with a smile—

"I thought, sir, I recognized you. I trust you have an attendant? Can I do any thing for you? Cold, this morning. Hadn't you better draw your muffler up a little about your face?" There was a significance about this last suggestion which Mr. Dingwell could not mistake, and he complied. "Running down again to Malory in a few days, I suppose?"

"Yes," said Dingwell.

"So shall I, and if quite convenient to you I should wish, sir, to talk that little matter over much more carefully, and—can I call a cab for you? I should look in upon you to-day only I must be at Brighton, not to return till to-morrow, and very busy then, too."

They parted. Dingwell did not like it.

"He's at mischief. I've thought of every thing, and I can't see *any* thing that would answer *his* game. I don't like his face."

Dingwell felt very oddly. It was all like a dream; an unaccountable horror overcame him. He sent out for a medicine that day, which the apothecary refused to give to Mrs. Rumble. But he wrote an explanatory note alleging that he was liable to fits, and so got back just a bottle, at which he pooh'd and psha'd, and wrote to some other apothecaries, and got together what he wanted, and told Mrs. Rumble he was better.

He had his dinner as usual in his snuggery in Rosemary Court, and sent two letters to the post by Mrs. Rumble. That to Lord Verney contained Larkin's *one* unguarded letter inviting him to visit England, and with all the caution compatible with being intelligible, *but still not* enough—suggesting the audacious game which had been so successfully played. A brief and pointed commentary in Mr. Dingwell's handwriting, accompanied this.

The other enclosed to Wynne Williams, to whose countenance he had taken a fancy; the certificate of his marriage to Rebecca Merryn, and a reference to the Rev. Thomas Barlett:

and charged him to make use of it to quiet any unfavorable rumors about that poor lady, who was the only human being he believed who had ever cared much about him.

When Wynne Williams opened this letter he lifted up his hands in wonder.

"A miracle, by heavens!" he exclaimed. "The most providential and marvelous interposition—the *only* thing we wanted!"

"Perhaps I was wrong to break with that villain, Larkin," brooded Mr. Dingwell. "We must make it up when we meet. I don't like it. When he saw me this morning his face looked like the hangman's."

It was now evening, and having made a very advantageous bargain with the Hebrew gentleman who had that heavy judgment against the late Hon. Arthur Verney, an outlaw, etc. —Mr. Larkin played his first move, and amid the screams of Mrs. Rumble, old Dingwell was arrested on a warrant against the Hon. Arthur Verney, and went away, protesting it was a false arrest, to the Fleet.

Things now looked very awful, and he wrote to Mr. Larkin at his hotel, begging of him to come and satisfy "some fools" that he was Mr. Dingwell. But Jos. Larkin was not at his inn. He had not been there that day, and Dingwell began to think that Jos. Larkin had, perhaps, told the truth for once, and was actually at Brighton. Well, one night in the Fleet was not very much; Larkin would appear next morning, and Larkin could, of course, manage the question of identity, and settle every thing easily, and they would shake hands, and make it up. Mr. Dingwell wondered why they had not brought him to a sponging-house, but direct to the prison. But as things were done under the advice of Mr. Jos. Larkin, in whom I have every confidence, I suppose there was a reason.

Mr. Dingwell was of a nature which danger excites rather than cows. The sense of adventure was uppermost. The situation by an odd reaction stimulated his spirits, and he grew frolicsome. He felt a recklessness that recalled his youth. He went down to the flagged yard, and made an acquaintance or two, one in slippers and dressing-gown, another in an evening coat buttoned across his breast, and without much show of shirt. "Very amusing and gentleman-like men," he thought, "though out at elbows a little;" and not caring for solitude, he invited them to his room, to supper; and they sat up late; and the gentleman in the black evening coat—an actor in difficulties—turned out to be a clever mimic, an inimitable singer of comic songs, and an admirable *raconteur*—"a very much cleverer man than the prime minister, egad!" said Mr. Dingwell.

One does see very clever fellows in odd situations. The race is not always to the swift. The moral qualities have something to do with it, and industry every thing; and thus very dull fellows are often in very high places. The curse implies a blessing to the man who accepts its condition. "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread." Labor is the curse and the *qualification*, also; and so the dullard who toils shall beat the genius who idles.

Dingwell enjoyed it vastly, and *lent* the pleasant fellow a pound, and got to his bed at three o'clock in the morning, glad to have cheated so much of the night. But tired as he was by his journey of the night before, he could not sleep till near six o'clock, when he fell into a doze, and from it he was awakened oddly.

It was by Mr. Jos. Larkin's "second move." Mr. Larkin has great malice, but greater prudence. No one likes better to give the man who has disappointed him a knock, the condition being that he disturbs no interest of his own by so doing. Where there is a proper consideration, no man is more forgiving. Where interest and revenge point the same way, he hits very hard indeed.

Mr. Larkin had surveyed the position carefully. The judgment of the criminal court was still on record, *nullum tempus occurrit*, etc. It was a case in which a pardon was very unlikely. There was but one way of placing the head of the Honorable Kiffyn Fulke Verney firmly in the vacant coronet, and of establishing him, Jos. Larkin, Esq., of the Lodge, in the valuable management of the estates and affairs of that wealthy peerage. It was by dropping the extinguisher upon the flame of that solitary lamp, the Hon. Arthur Verney. Of course Jos. Larkin's hand must not appear. He himself communicated with no official person. That was managed easily and adroitly.

He wrote, too, from Brighton to Lord Verney at Malory, the day after his interview with that ex-nobleman, expressing "the most serious uneasiness, in consequence of having learned from a London legal acquaintance at Brighton, that a report prevailed in certain quarters of the city, that the person styling himself Mr. Dingwell had proved to be the Hon. Arthur Verney, and that the Verney peerage was, in consequence, once more on the shelf. "I treated this report slightly, in very serious alarm notwithstanding for your brother's safety," wrote Mr. Larkin, "and your lordship will pardon my expressing my regret that you should have mentioned, until the Hon. Arthur Verney had secured an asylum outside England, the fact of his being still living, which has filled the town unfortunately with conjecture and speculation of a most startling nature. I was shocked to see him this morning on the public platform of the railway, where, very possibly, he was recognized. It is incredible how many years are needed to obliterate recollection by the hand of time. I quietly entreated him to conceal his face a little, a precaution which, I am happy to add, he adopted. I am quite clear that he should leave London as expeditiously and secretly as possible, for some sequestered spot in France, where he can, without danger, await your lordship's decision as to plans for his ultimate safety. May I entreat your lordship's instantaneous attention to this most urgent and

alarming subject. I shall be in town to-morrow evening, where my usual address will reach me, and I shall, without a moment's delay, apply myself to carry out whatever your lordship's instructions may direct."

"Yes, he has an idea of my judgment—about it," said Lord Verney when he had read this letter, "and a feeling about the family—very loyal—yes, he's a very loyal person; I shall turn it over, I will—I'll write to him."

Mr. Dingwell, however, had been wakened by two officers with a warrant by which they were ordered to take his body and consign it to a jailer. Mr. Dingwell read it, and his instinct told him that Jos. Larkin was at the bottom of his misfortune, and his heart sank.

"Very well, gentlemen," said he, briskly, "it is not for me; my name is Dingwell, and my solicitor is Mr. Jos. Larkin, and all will be right. I must get my clothes on, if you please."

And he sat up in the bed, and bit his lip, and raised his eyebrows, and shrugged his shoulders drearily.

"Poor linnet—ay, ay—she was not very wise, but the only one—I've been a great fool—let us try."

There came over his face a look of inexpressible fatigue and something like resignation—and he looked all at once ten years older.

"I'll be with you, I'll be with you, gentlemen," he said very gently.

There was a flask with some noyeau in it, relics of last night's merry-making, to which these gentlemen took the liberty of helping themselves.

When they looked again at their prisoner he was lying nearly on his face, in a profound sleep, his chin on his chest.

"Choice stuff—smell o' nuts in it," said Constable Ruddle, licking his lips. "Git up, sir; ye can take a nap when you git there."

There was a little phial in the old man's fingers; the smell of kernels was stronger about the pillow. "The old man of the mountains" was in a deep sleep, the deepest of all sleeps—death.

CHAPTER LXIX.

CONCLUSION.

And now all things with which, in these pages, we are concerned, are come to that point at which they are best settled in a very few words.

The *one* point required to establish Sedley's claim to the peerage—the validity of the marriage—had been supplied by old Arthur Verney, as we have seen, the night before his death.

The late Lord Verney of unscrupulous memory, Arthur's father, had, it was believed, induced Captain Sedley, in whose charge the infant had been placed, to pretend its death, and send the child in reality to France, where it had been nursed and brought up as his. He was dependent for his means of existence upon his employment as manager of his estates, under Lord Verney; and he dared not, it was thought, from some brief expressions in a troubled letter among the papers placed by old Mrs. Mervyn in Wynne Williams's hands, notwithstanding many qualms of conscience, disobey Lord Verney. And he was quieted farther by the solemn assurance that the question of validity of the pretended marriage had been thoroughly sifted, and that it was proved to have been a nullity.

He carefully kept, however, such papers as were in his possession respecting the identity of the child, and added a short statement of his own. If that old Lord Verney had suspected the truth that the marriage was valid, as it afterward proved, he was the only member of his family who did so. The rest had believed honestly the story that it was fraudulent and illusory. The apparent proof of the child's death had put an end to all interest in farther investigating the question, and so the matter rested until time and events brought all to light.

The dream that made Malory beautiful in my eyes is over. The image of that young fair face—the beautiful lady of the chestnut hair and great hazel eyes haunts its dark woods less palpably, and the glowing shadow fades, year by year, away.

In sunny Italy, where her mother was born, those eyes having looked their last on Cleve and on "the boy," and up, in clouded hope to heaven—were closed, and the slender bones repose. "I think, Cleve, you'll sometimes remember your poor Margaret. I know you'll always be very kind to the little boy—*our* darling, and if you marry again, Cleve, *she'll* not be a trouble to you, as I have been; and you said, you'll sometimes think of me. You'll forget all my jealousy, and temper, and folly, and you'll say, 'Ah, she loved me.'"

And these last words return, though the lips that spoke them come no more; and he *is* very kind to that handsome boy—frank, generous, and fiery like her, with the great hazel eyes and beautiful tints, and the fine and true affections. At times comes something in the smile, in the tone as he talks, in the laugh that thrills his heart with a strange yearning and agony. Vain remorse! vain the yearnings; for the last words are spoken and heard; not one word *more* while the heavens remain, and mortals people the earth!

Sedley—Lord Verney we should style him—will never be a politician, but he has turned out a thoroughly useful business-like and genial country gentleman. Agnes, now Lady Verney, is I will not say how happy; I only hope not too happy.

Need I say that the cloud that lowered for a while over the house of Hazelden has quite melted into air, and that the sun never shone brighter on that sweet landscape? Miss Etherage is a great heiress now, for Sedley, as for sake of clearness I call him still, refused a deed with his wife, and that handsome inheritance will all belong to Charity, who is as emphatic,

obstinate, and kind-hearted as ever. The admiral has never gone down the mill-road since his introduction to the Honorable Kiffyn Fulke Verney at the foot of the hill. He rolls in his chair safely along the level uplands, and amuses himself with occasional inspections of Ware through his telescope; and tells little Agnes, when he sees her, what she was doing on a certain day, and asks who the party with the phaeton and greys, who called on Thursday at two o'clock, were, and similar questions; and likes to hear the news, and they say is growing more curious as years increase. He and Charity have revived their acquaintance with *écarté* and *piquet*, and play for an hour or so very snugly in the winter evenings. Miss Charity is a little cross when she loses, and won't let old Etherage play more than his allotted number of games; and locks up the cards; and is growing wife-like with the admiral; but is quite devoted to him, and will make him live, I think, six years longer than any one else could.

Sedley wrote a very kind letter to the Hon. Kiffyn Fulke Verney, to set his mind at ease about *mesne rates*, and any other claims whatsoever, that might arise against him, in consequence of his temporary tenure of the title and estates, and received from Vichy a very affronted reply, begging him to take whatever course he might be advised, as he distinctly objected to being placed under any kind of personal obligation, and trusted that he would not seek to place such a construction upon a compulsory respect for the equities of the situation, and the decencies enforced by public opinion; and he declared his readiness to make any sacrifice to pay him whatever his strict legal rights entitled him to the moment he had made up his mind to exact them.

The Hon. Kiffyn Fulke Verney is, of course, quite removed from his sphere of usefulness and distinction—parliamentary life—and spends his time upon the Continent, and is remarkably reserved and impertinent, and regarded with very general respect and hatred.

Sedley has been very kind, for Cleve's sake, to old Sir Booth Fanshawe, with whom he is the only person on earth who has an influence.

He wrote to the baronet, who was then in Paris, disclosing the secret of Cleve's marriage. The old man burst into one of his frenzies, and wrote forthwith a frantic letter direct to his mortal enemy, the Hon. Kiffyn Fulke Verney, railing at Cleve, railing at *him*, and calling upon him, in a tone of preposterous menace, to punish his nephew! Had he been left to himself, I dare say he would have made Cleve feel his resentment. But thus bullied he said—"Upon my life I'll do no such thing. I'm in the habit of thinking before I take steps, about it—with Booth Fanshawe's permission, I'll act according to my own judgment, and I dare say the girl has got some money, and if it were not good for Cleve in some way, that old person would not be so angry." And so it ended for the present.

The new Lord Verney went over expressly to see him, and in the same conversation, in which he arranged some law business in the friendliest way, and entirely to Sir Booth Fanshawe's satisfaction, he discussed the question of Cleve's marriage. At first the baronet was incensed; but when the hurly-burly was done he came to see, with our friend Tom, whose peerage gave his opinion weight on the subject of marriages and family relations, that the alliance was not so bad—on the contrary, that it had some very strong points to recommend it.

The Rev. Isaac Dixie has not got on in the Church, and is somehow no favorite at Ware. The Hon. Miss Caroline Oldys is still unmarried, and very bitter on the Verneys, uncle and nephew; people don't understand why, though the reader may. Perhaps she thinks that the Hon. Kiffyn Fulke Verney ought to have tried again, and was too ready to accept a first refusal. Her hatred of Cleve I need not explain.

With respect to Mr. Larkin, I cite an old Dutch proverb, which says, "Those who swim deep and climb high seldom die in their beds." In its fair figurative sense it applies satisfactorily to the case of that profound and aspiring gentleman who, as some of my readers are aware, fell at last from a high round of the ladder of his ambition, and was drowned in the sea beneath. No—not drowned; that were too painless, and implies extinction. He fell, rather, upon that black flooring of rock that rims the water, and was smashed, but not killed.

It was, as they will remember, after his introduction to the management of the affairs of the Wylder, Brandon, and Lake families, and on the eve, to all appearance, of the splendid consummation of his subtle and audacious schemes, that in a moment the whole scaffolding of his villainy gave way, and he fell headlong—thenceforth, helpless, sprawling, backbroken, living on from year to year, and eating metaphoric dust, like the great old reptile who is as yet mangled but not killed.

Happy fly the years at Ware. Many fair children have blessed the union of pretty Agnes Etherage and the kindly heir of the Verneys. Cleve does not come himself; he goes little to any gay country houses. A kind of lassitude or melancholy is settling and deepening upon him. To one passage of his life he looks back with a quickly averted glance, and an unchanging horror—the time when he was saved from a great crime, as it were, by the turning of a die. "Those three dreadful weeks," he says within himself, "when I was *mad!*" But his handsome son is constantly at Ware, where he is beloved by its master and mistress like one of their own children. One day Lord Verney ran across to Malory in his yacht, this boy with him. It was an accidental *tête-à-tête*, and he talked to the boy a great deal of his "poor mamma," as he sauntered through the sunny woods of Malory; and he brought him to the refectory, and pointed out to him, from the window, the spot where he had seen her, with her trowel in her

hand, as the morning sun threw the shadow of the spreading foliage over her, and he described her beauty to him; and he walked down with him to Cardyllian, the yacht was appointed to meet them at the pier, and brought him into the church, to the pew where he was placed, and showed him the seat where she and Anne Sheckleton sat on the Sunday when he saw her first, and looked for a while silently into that void shadow, for it is pleasant and yet sad to call up sometimes those old scenes and images that have made us feel, when we were younger; and somehow good Lady Verney did not care to hear her husband upon this theme.

So for the present the story of the Verneys of Malory is told. Years hence, when we shall not be here to read it, the same scenes and family may have a new story to tell; for time, with his shuttle and the threads of fate, is ever weaving new romance.

THE END.